Reasons to believe Seattle can win Super Bowl again

Among encouraging signs for Seahawks: the return of most core players. **In Sports**

Fox embraces role of being face of Parkinson's disease

Actor reflects on advocacy and life purpose. Plus, Carly Simon reveals her diagnosis. **In Life**

Looking to save on supplies

With rising costs still a big concern, parents plan to maximize savings on back-to-school items during tax-free shopping days. **In Money**

USA TODAY

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GETTY IMAGES

Markets guessing on Fed's direction

New chair Kevin Warsh keeps his cards close

Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

As many Americans struggle to make ends meet, Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh has pledged to bring inflation back to its 2% target, but it remains unclear exactly how he plans to get there as the central bank heads into its July meeting.

The Fed often finds itself at a crossroads, balancing its dual mandate of maximum employment and stable prices. It has two main tools it uses to address both: its balance sheet and the federal funds rate, a benchmark for interest rates. The Fed typically raises its target range for the rate to tame inflation and lowers the rate to stimulate the job market.

After three months of accelerating inflation, it slowed in June, though some forecasters expect it may tick back up amid renewed U.S.-Iran hostilities. And after three months of positive job growth, U.S. employer hiring fell in June — leaving the Fed to sort out whether the swings are just noise or the start of new trends.

The Fed may also be at a crossroads when it comes to delivering on Warsh's

See FED, Page 2A

Follow live developments online at usatoday.com

Keep up with the latest as Federal Reserve holds its two-day meeting.

Revoking citizenship, once rare, is revving up

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Revoking an immigrant's citizenship has proven to be a costly and controversial practice over the years, but the Trump administration says hundreds of people deserve to have their citizenship stripped anyway.

The plan calls for ramping up the previously rare denaturalization process as a part of a broader immigration enforcement agenda, expanding a practice President Donald Trump started in his first term.

The Justice Department has moved to revoke the citizenship of nearly 90 people since the start of 2025. By October, the government aims to file at least 250 denaturalization cases in federal court.

Under federal law, the government can ask a judge to revoke the citizenship of someone who obtained it through fraud or misrepresentation – such as using a false identity or concealing a disqualifying criminal record during the naturalization process.

See CITIZENSHIP, Page 3A

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Jacob Carnes and Lili White of the Washington Department of Ecology collect water samples from a pond near the Army's Yakima Training Center. Wells at more than 140 homes nearby have tested over the Environmental Protection Agency's drinking water limit for PFAS. PROVIDED BY WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Military bases delay toxic PFAS cleanup

Phoebe Hyatt, 11, fills a glass from a water dispenser in her family's kitchen in East Selah, Washington, near the Army's Yakima Training Center. PROVIDED BY BRANDI HYATT

The War Department "chose to quietly remove the previous cleanup schedule from its website and publish new timelines. This is ultimately a violation of trust."

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington

'Forever chemicals' remediation put off decades in some cases

Austin Fast USA TODAY

It's been almost five years since Brandi and Brad Hyatt found out the well at their home next to an Army base in Washington is contaminated with "forever chemicals."

They started using bottled water for everything from making coffee to rinsing off toothbrushes. The couple even carted their two small children across town to bathe at a gym so they couldn't accidentally swallow contaminated bathwater.

The Army installed a filter last year, but the well remains contaminated. The kids will be long grown by the time the military provides a permanent fix, now delayed until after 2042.

Hundreds of military bases have been putting off cleanup of toxic PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, for years, according to a new USA TODAY analysis of military records. The latest round of delays, which the Pentagon posted in an obscure corner of its website in May, has pushed some deadlines out decades,

See PFAS CLEANUP, Page 6A

Check military bases near you

Scan the QR code to search for military sites in your area and see their timeline for PFAS cleanup.

Alone in the open ocean, 'I borrow their bravery'

Swimmer goes distance for cancer survivors

Ansley Gavlak
USA TODAY

One of ultra-marathon swimmer Maya Merhige's biggest fears is jellyfish. Yet she willingly spends hours swimming through some of the world's largest and most dangerous bodies of water.

Why?

Because she swims for those who can't.

Every time Merhige jumps into freezing water surrounded by sharks and jellyfish, she is raising money for cancer research and patient programs through the nonprofit Swim Across America.

"If those patients can do cancer treatment – if those 7-year-olds and 4-year-olds can go through a day of cancer treatment – then I can most definitely swim another 20 strokes," she says.

So far, Merhige, 18, has raised more than $172,000 for cancer research.

She aims to become the youngest person to complete the Oceans Seven challenge, a series of the world's seven

See MAYA MERHIGE, Page 6A

Maya Merhige, 18, aims to become the youngest person to finish the Oceans Seven open-water swim challenge. PROVIDED BY SWIM ACROSS AMERICA

Biden ends legal bid to keep interview recordings private

Decision clears way for release to GOP-led panel

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

Former President Joe Biden has dropped his lawsuit seeking to block the public release of audio recordings from interviews he gave to the ghostwriter of his memoirs, clearing the way for the material to be released to a Republican-led House committee.

Biden's attorneys filed a notice of voluntary dismissal July 25 in U.S. District Court in Washington, DC, days after a divided federal appeals court rejected his request to keep the recordings and transcripts private, according to reports from The Hill and NBC4 Washington.

The filing ends Biden's legal challenge after the court ruled there is a substantial public interest in disclosure.

The decision follows months of litigation over recordings obtained during special counsel Robert Hur's investigation into Biden's handling of classified documents. Hur declined to bring criminal charges against Biden in 2024, but Republicans later sought access to the interview materials.

Biden's legal team had argued that the recordings captured private conversations in his home and that releasing them would amount to an unwarranted invasion of his privacy. Instead of pursuing additional appeals, including a possible request to the Supreme Court, Biden chose to dismiss the case.

Appeals court sides with disclosure

The voluntary dismissal came less than a week after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled 2-1 against Biden.

In the majority opinion, Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan and Judge Gregory Katsas concluded that any privacy concerns did not outweigh the public's interest in releasing the redacted materials.

"We conclude that any remaining incursion on personal privacy from disclosure of the now-redacted materials likely does not outweigh the public interest in disclosure," the judges wrote.

Judge Florence Pan dissented, writing that Biden had demonstrated a "substantial privacy interest" because the conversations occurred in his home and were obtained during a criminal investigation that did not result in an indictment.

The recordings come from interviews Biden gave to Mark Zwonitzer in 2016 and 2017 while working on his memoir "Promise Me, Dad." Zwonitzer also collaborated with Biden on his 2007 memoir, "Promises to Keep."

Federal investigators later obtained the recordings during Hur's investigation into Biden's retention of classified documents from his time as a senator and vice president. Although Hur declined to file charges, Republicans in Congress sought the materials after the investigation concluded.

Legal battle over FOIA request

The case began after the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, sought the recordings through the Freedom of Information Act and later sued to obtain their release.

In June, U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich ruled that Biden's privacy interests, while legitimate, were outweighed by the public interest in government transparency. She also found that Justice Department redactions adequately protected sensitive personal information.

Biden appealed that ruling, which temporarily blocked the release while the case moved through the courts.

Missing Utah hiker, 83, rescued near Grand Canyon

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

An 83-year-old man who vanished while hiking near the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park was rescued after an overnight search that involved helicopters, drones, search dogs and dozens of rescuers, officials said.

Gerald Guinn, of Kanab, Utah, was found July 22 after spending about a day and a half in rugged terrain.

National Park Service officials said Guinn was located during a helicopter reconnaissance flight about 2½ miles from where he was last seen and was carried to a nearby roadway for medical evaluation.

Despite spending the night outdoors, Guinn was described as in "good spirits." He was evaluated by emergency medical personnel before being released, according to the National Park Service and the Kane County Sheriff's Office.

Multiple agencies assisted in the rescue, including Grand Canyon National Park, Kane County Search and Rescue and Coconino County Search and Rescue.

Hiker disappeared after splitting up with companion

According to the Kane County Sheriff's Office, Guinn and another person began what was intended to be a short hike around 12:30 p.m. July 21 in a remote area along the border of Grand Canyon National Park and the Kaibab National Forest.

The pair intentionally separated while searching for a nearby historic object. Although the other hiker found the site, Guinn never returned. After searching for several hours without success, the companion called for help.

Kane County Search and Rescue launched an overnight search, deploying ground crews, drones equipped with forward-looking infrared technology and search dogs, but Guinn was not found.

Cell phone ping helped guide rescuers

The National Park Service assumed command of the search July 22, adding helicopter and ground search teams. Kane County rescuers later rejoined the effort.

Officials said a cell phone ping narrowed Guinn's general location, shifting search efforts farther east.

A National Park Service helicopter eventually spotted Guinn, who was able to wave to the crew from below.

The helicopter could not land because of the steep terrain, prompting a Kane County Search and Rescue team to hike about 1½ miles to reach him.

Rescuers found Guinn cold and unable to walk but otherwise alert.

They provided warm clothing and fluids while preparing for an aerial evacuation.

As darkness approached, officials determined a helicopter short haul could not be completed safely.

Instead, a paramedic was lowered to the scene, and about 20 rescuers carried Guinn to safety, clearing fallen logs and marking hazards along the way.

The operation concluded around 1:30 a.m. on July 23. After reaching the roadway, Guinn was evaluated by Kane County Emergency Medical Services, cleared and released.

Reporter Anthony Thompson can be reached at ajthompson@usatodayco.com, or on X @athompsonUSAT

Newly confirmed Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh has called inflation "a choice" and told Congress it would end on his watch. ERIC LEE/REUTERS

Fed

Continued from Page 1A

promise of price stability for consumers. Many Americans don't want higher interest rates on their credit cards and personal loans, but they also don't want prices to keep rising. Raising the Fed's benchmark interest rate could help cool inflation, but it would make borrowing more expensive.

Dean Lyulkin, CEO of Cardiff, a small-business loan company, said Warsh's refusal to provide forward guidance has made the outcome of the July meeting difficult to predict.

"Warsh remains an enigma," he said. "No one really understands whether he means what he says or what the things he's saying mean. Until we get a little more data on this Warsh Fed, I think everyone is confused."

Amid the uncertainty, forecasters – many of whom are split – mostly expect the Federal Open Market Committee to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged at a range of 3.5% to 3.75% at the end of its two-day meeting July 29.

A promise to lower inflation but no promise to hike

American consumers have faced inflation above the Fed's 2% target for five years. Warsh, in congressional testimony earlier in July, said "inflation is a choice" and told lawmakers it wouldn't be permanent on his watch. The Fed can't directly control prices at the grocery store or gas pump, but Warsh has repeatedly said he views the Fed's job as ensuring price increases don't broaden into the wider U.S. economy.

"If we get policy right, and I can assure you we will, the inflation surge of the last five years will be a thing of the past," Warsh told senators July 14.

Still, there are a few reasons why Fed policymakers may not be in a rush to raise rates at their July meeting.

As year-over-year consumer inflation rose from 2.4% in February to 4.2% in May, traders began betting on a hike. But June's deceleration to 3.5% and a weaker jobs report gave some reason to pause. Though a 9.7% drop in gas prices drove the headline inflation number lower, "core" inflation – excluding volatile food and energy prices – also fell in June, meaning the deceleration could not be disregarded as only a result of the temporary ceasefire in Iran.

"It was a pretty good report across the board, surprisingly so," said David Royal, chief financial and investment officer at Thrivent, a financial services company.

The July meeting also comes amid court-ordered tariff refunds, new tariff announcements from the Trump administration, and escalated fighting in the Iran war – all of which will affect the economy.

A rate hike, cut or pause? Any one appears possible

Depending on whom you ask, the Fed should do all three.

Warsh told lawmakers he expects another "good family fight" at the July meeting after FOMC members were divided on the best path for rates in June. Though Warsh did not submit his own projections, eight members saw the Fed holding the range steady, nine saw room to hike, and one saw room to cut before the end of 2026.

"Most participants remarked on scenarios in which inflationary pressures would dissipate and inflation would soon begin to return to 2 percent," minutes from their June meeting said. "Most participants, however, also pointed to scenarios in which, in the context of stable labor market conditions, inflation would remain elevated due to strong AI-related demand, the conflict in the Middle East, or the effects of tariffs."

After the June meeting, some voting members of the FOMC appeared open to raising rates. Fed Governor Lisa Cook said July 15 that she was willing to wait "a bit more time" but that she'd be prepared to act if inflation doesn't begin to slow and that she believes risks continue to be "strongly weighted" toward higher inflation.

"Sternly staring at inflation until it melts before our withering gaze is not an option," Fed Governor Christopher Waller said July 13 ahead of the June inflation report's release.

After its release, White House Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett said that the Fed has no "excuse" to raise rates and that if inflation continues to slow, he'd begin expecting a cut.

"If you're watching the data, then, you know, there's not really an excuse for raising rates right now," Hassett told CNBC on July 15. "Another report or two like this, then I think they'd be thinking the other way."

Where are interest rates headed? Politics could have a say

The Federal Reserve will keep its benchmark rate steady for the rest of the year, according to the median forecasts of economists polled by Reuters. But in a separate question about the chance of a rate increase in 2026, most described the likelihood as "high," a reversal from the month before when most viewed it as "low."

"It's been a long time since we were actually surprised by the Fed's decision," Royal said, adding that he expects more surprise moves from the Fed under Warsh than under former Chair Jerome Powell.

He added, however, that policymakers may hold off on a move until they can hear from the five task forces Warsh created to advise them on monetary policy. They are expected to deliver recommendations before the end of this year.

Though Warsh has repeatedly and publicly affirmed his independence from politics, Royal and Lyulkin said he may also be considering the potential effects of raising rates before this year's midterm elections.

"Raising rates into the midterms is almost a suicide mission for the Republicans, and I think we have to believe that Kevin Warsh understands that," Lyulkin said, adding consumers probably would blame the GOP as the party in power. "If you're in Congress, you can't imagine telling the American people today – maybe three, four months before the midterms – that we're going to increase the interest rates on their credit cards and their auto loans."

President Donald Trump, who in his second term has pressured policymakers to lower rates, has said little about the Fed since Warsh was sworn in as chair in late May. After policymakers left rates unchanged in June, Trump responded, "Whatever."

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Citizenship

Continued from Page 1A

The administration is on pace to pursue more denaturalization cases than any other in recent modern American history. By comparison, the Biden administration brought 24 cases over four years; the Trump administration filed 102 denaturalization cases in the president's first term, according to the DOJ.

"This is a major increase that we haven't seen in decades," said Cassandra Robertson, a professor of law at Case Western Reserve University and an expert on denaturalization.

The Trump administration says it is targeting criminals and fraudsters who should not have become citizens in the first place. It framed the campaign as an effort to preserve the integrity of naturalization.

"When you commit fraud during the naturalization process, you forfeit the right to keep your U.S. citizenship," Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said in a statement. "DHS is committed to ensuring we denaturalize and remove these fraudsters with every tool at our disposal."

For decades the government pursued only a handful of denaturalization cases each year, in part because they require significant resources, are expensive and can take years to resolve. The cases prosecutors did pursue largely targeted national security threats, affiliates of terror groups and suspected war criminals.

But since Trump returned to office, his administration has moved to expand the use of denaturalization. The DOJ's civil division has been ordered to prioritize denaturalization, and agency leaders have enlisted the help of U.S. attorney's offices nationwide to boost case numbers. In a post on X on July 20, the White House described the campaign as the "Largest Denaturalization Effort Ever."

Former DOJ attorneys and immigration law experts said the cases being pursued under Trump largely don't appear out of step with previous administrations. But they expressed concerns that the effort could divert resources from other priorities like prosecuting fraud or corruption cases. Some blasted the effort as a tactic meant to intimidate the country's more than 26 million naturalized citizens.

"I don't think this will make any dent in the administration's deportation goals," said Stacey Young, a former DOJ lawyer, describing denaturalization as slow-moving and, to a certain degree, unscalable. "I think it does send a message that naturalized citizenship is impermanent and precarious."

A new administration, a new push for denaturalization

Within a week of taking office in 2025, Trump ordered "adequate resources" be dedicated to denaturalizing some U.S. citizens as part of his broader immigration strategy.

Months later, the DOJ issued a memo directing the agency's civil division, which primarily handles denaturalization cases, to "prioritize and maximally pursue denaturalization proceedings."

As of July 22, the Justice Department has filed at least 89 denaturalization cases in federal court, according to a DOJ official – nearly four times as many as were pursued during President Joe Biden's term in office.

Of the cases filed under Trump, the government has won at least 19, the DOJ official said. And while most cases were handled by the DOJ's civil division, a significant portion has been taken up by U.S. attorney's offices across the country – a shift in procedure that experts say highlights how the government is diverting resources to try to strip more people of their U.S. citizenship than ever before.

"Occasionally the civil division would partner with U.S. attorney's offices, but that was rare," said Young, who worked in the DOJ's civil division from 2006 to 2019 under the Bush, Obama and first Trump administrations. "I don't remember any cases being handled exclusively by U.S. attorney's offices."

Many of the pending cases involve allegations that the defendant lied or omitted details about their conduct that would have made them ineligible for U.S. citizenship.

In most cases, the Justice Department cited criminal convictions on serious charges such as sexual abuse, wire fraud and drug distribution. Others involve allegations that the defendant used a fake name during the naturalization process. In multiple cases, the government accused defendants of participating in war crimes or supporting foreign terrorist organizations such as al-Qaida and al-Shabaab.

Immigration experts and former DOJ lawyers said the government's allegations so far don't appear out of the ordinary but noted the surge in cases overall – the result of more resources being dedicated to pursuing denaturalization.

Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minnesota, has been a frequent target of President Donald Trump's push to reexamine criteria for revoking U.S. citizenships.
TIM EVANS/REUTERS

"On first blush, these cases don't look all that different from cases that have been brought by previous administrations," said Daniel Kanstroom, a law professor at Boston College who specializes in immigration.

He added that the DOJ appears to be targeting people who pleaded guilty to crimes committed before or during naturalization. This group, according to the government, should have been denied citizenship in the first place because they did not meet the "good moral character" requirement.

Fraud or 'willful' untruths as guidelines for prosecution

From 1990 to 2017, an average of 11 denaturalization cases were filed each year, according to the Migration Policy Institute. The low number can largely be traced back to a 1967 ruling by the Supreme Court that says the government can revoke citizenship only in the case of fraud or "willful misrepresentation."

That decision followed a Cold War effort to denaturalize people whom the government perceived as political enemies, including labor leaders, journalists and government opponents accused of being communists, said Amanda Frost, a University of Virginia law professor and immigration attorney. Through the two world wars and into the 1950s, about 22,000 immigrants saw their U.S. citizenship revoked, Frost said.

In the decades that followed, the government limited its prosecutions, focusing mainly on national security threats or people with ties to foreign terrorist groups. "Republican and Democratic administrations post the Supreme Court decision understood the message of that case and understood that denaturalization was to be used sparingly and was not supposed to be a bread-and-butter tool of immigration enforcement," Frost said.

Denaturalization cases did tick up under President Barack Obama. At the time, new digital fingerprinting technology revealed that hundreds of people who had been ordered deported had been naturalized using different iden tities. The Obama administration began a review aiming to denaturalize any citizen with ties to foreign terrorist organizations.

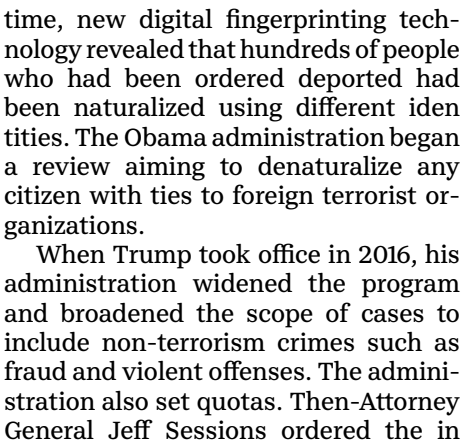
When Trump took office in 2016, his administration widened the program and broadened the scope of cases to include non-terrorism crimes such as fraud and violent offenses. The administration also set quotas. Then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered the in vestigation of 700,000 naturalized citizens, with a goal of bringing about 1,600 cases to court.

Although those goals weren't ultimately met, the number of denaturalization cases brought by the Justice Department jumped to an estimated 168 over four years, far outpacing the Obama and Bush administrations.

Denaturalization cases are long, costly and difficult to win

Among the reasons only a handful of denaturalization cases were pursued over the decades is that they can take years to resolve and demand significant resources.

"It's a cumbersome process," said Young, the former litigator and founder of Justice Connection. "There's tons of evidence, intensive discovery, and cases often go to trial or go up on appeal."



Under President Barack Obama, denaturalization cases rose as digital fingerprinting helped identify citizens with possible ties to terrorist groups.
JOVANNY HERNANDEZ/USA TODAY NETWORK

The Trump administration's de naturalization push comes as the Justice Department grapples with an exodus of government lawyers and a historic caseload stemming from legal challenges to the White House's deportation campaign.

"They're overwhelmed," Young said of federal attorneys nationwide, adding that the denaturalization push could pull prosecutors away from crucial work such as litigating cases involving health care fraud, environmental crimes, corruption and national security violations.

And even when a judge sides with the government, that doesn't always lead to deportation. Instead, defendants revert to their previous status, which is often a lawful permanent resident with the right to due process and a hearing before an immigration judge.

"To remove them you have to go through a whole separate process," Young said.

Nevertheless, the Trump administration is set on pursuing as many cases as possible. Assistant Attorney General Brett Shumate said July 20 that the federal government has "only scratched the surface" and promised "many more complaints are coming."

"We refuse to give a free pass to criminals who cheated their way into American citizenship," Shumate said. "Under this administration, if you defrauded the naturalization process, you will face the full force of the Justice Department."

Trump, Republican allies seek to widen the net

A DOJ memo published in 2025 expands what denaturalization cases should be prioritized.

Some of the new language called for focus on people tied to drug cartels and suspects of "fraud against private individuals, funds, or corporations." One section of the memo directs staff to prioritize cases the civil division "determines to be sufficiently important to pursue."

Opponents fear that could open the door to prosecutions targeting the administration's perceived political enemies or specific minority groups, especially given Trump's threats to remove some of his adversaries from the country.

Young, who worked in the DOJ for nearly 20 years, said the memo's language suggests the division will "target anyone for denaturalization it wants, whenever it chooses – regardless of whether a person poses a threat to the public, or engaged in egregious past conduct."

The Justice Department did not respond to a request for comment on the memo.

Trump has repeatedly suggested that Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minnesota, should be removed from the country. In an interview with The New York Times in January, he said his administration was examining criteria for taking away American citizenships with a particular eye for people of Somali descent.

The president also floated the claim that New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani is "here illegally" and vowed to "look at everything." Two Republican congressmen, Andy Ogles and Randy Fine, have called on the Justice Department to investigate Mamdani's naturalization documents.

Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, several Republicans introduced bills this year intended to expand denaturalization.

A bill from Texas Rep. Chip Roy seeks to denaturalize "advocates for socialism, communism, Marxism, or Islamic fundamentalism." A bill from Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Missouri, would create a path to denaturalize anyone convicted of an aggravated felony, fraud or espionage as long as 10 years after naturalization. Currently, the government cannot denaturalize someone for their actions after becoming a citizen except in a few rare circumstances.

Though neither bill is expected to become law, experts said it demonstrates a growing desire among Republicans to widen the government's ability to denaturalize some U.S. citizens.

Still, any large-scale denaturalization effort faces a significant obstacle: federal judges. Immigration attorneys and former Justice Department officials said they expect the courts to carefully review each case on its merits, as required by law.

"I would expect federal judges to be extremely careful with these cases," said Kanstroom, of Boston College. "The case law is very clear that citizenship is a precious thing, and it should not be taken away lightly."

2nd suspect is sought in Seattle shooting

Three killed, four hurt by gunfire at festival

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Authorities were searching for a second suspect who they believe opened fire at a food festival in Seattle, killing three people and injuring at least four.

The gunfire erupted Sunday, July 26, on the final night of the Bite of Seattle food festival at the Seattle Center, an outdoor park home to the Space Needle. The shots sent the large crowd of families and vendors into a frenzy as people ran for cover.

In total, seven people were struck by gunfire, said Assistant Seattle Police Chief Tyrone Davis. The wounded included a 2-year-old boy.

Police believe the incident stemmed from a shoot-out between at least two people near the Seattle Center's indoor food and event hall. One suspect surrendered to police, and another fled the area, Davis said. He added that more people could have been involved and urged witnesses to come forward.

"We're still trying to figure this out," Davis said at a news conference hours after the shooting. "We know that there were people out there when this incident occurred, that saw what happened and know some of the people that might be involved."

Police were at the Seattle Center when the gunfire erupted and responded within seconds, Davis said. Despite lifesaving efforts, two people were pronounced dead at the scene. Several others were taken to hospitals, where one woman died from her injuries, the Seattle Police Department said.

By the next day, medical staff had discharged three adults, said Susan Gregg, a spokesperson for the University of Washington School of Medicine. The toddler remained at Harborview Medical Center but was in stable condition, she said.

Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson described the shootings as "an act of horrific violence."

"Impacted families are living through the worst moment of their lives, and an entire community is trying to understand how a gathering built around culture, connection, and joy ended in gunfire," she said.

Founded in 1982, Bite of Seattle has been a summer tradition in the Northwest for over 40 years and features more than 130 food and beverage vendors, along with live cooking demos, live music and other activities.

What do we know about the Seattle shooting victims?

Two men, ages 19 and 44, and a 56-year-old woman were killed, according to a statement from the Seattle Police Department. The agency did not publicly identify the victims.

The two men died at the scene. The woman died at Harborview Medical Center, the region's top-level trauma center, where she and multiple other people were taken after the shooting.

As of Monday, July 27, only the toddler remained hospitalized at Harborview Medical Center, said Gregg, a spokesperson for the University of Washington School of Medicine, which operates the hospital. The boy was listed in "satisfactory condition," she said.

A 23-year-old man and 39-year-old woman were discharged, Gregg said.

At UW Medical Center-Montlake, medical staff discharged a 27-year-old man, Gregg said.

Police recover 2 guns after food festival shooting

Davis said authorities recovered two firearms at the scene. He did not describe the weapons. He added that there was no "outstanding threat to the community."

Multiple other local, state and federal agencies, including the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, also responded to the scene.

Davis said police have a "limited number of witnesses" and urged more to speak with law enforcement. He also said there were no surveillance cameras in the area where the shooting broke out.

Church endorsement battle intensifies

IRS Code amendment at heart of political debate

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

As the midterm campaign heats up, a legal battle continues to unfold over whether churches will be able to endorse candidates and more openly take part in politics – without drawing the ire of the Internal Revenue Service.

The IRS has long banned tax-exempt houses of worship from direct involvement in politics. But since 2024, there has been a heated court battle trying to overturn the rules. At one point, a settlement paved the way for the reversal of decades of precedent – only for a judge to throw it all out.

The Johnson Amendment was added to the Internal Revenue Code in 1954 and banned all tax-exempt 501c(3) organizations, such as churches and charities, from "directly or indirectly" participating in politics, specifically in endorsement or opposition of candidates.

The National Religious Broadcasters, an international association of evangelical Christian communicators, as well as the conservative advocacy group Intercessors for America and two Texas churches – First Baptist Church Waskom in Waskom, Texas, and Sand Springs Church in Athens, Texas – sued the IRS over the rule in September 2024, alleging that it violated their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

The parties reached a proposed settlement in 2025. It included the IRS reversing decades of legal precedent by saying churches and other religious 501c(3) organizations could endorse political candidates in certain circumstances.

In court documents, the agency said political endorsements made by a church would not be seen as "participating" or "intervening" in political campaigns, but instead as a "family discussion concerning politics."

But a judge dismissed the entire case in a surprise ruling in late March, saying federal courts do not have the jurisdiction to change the tax status of a plaintiff or create exemptions from tax laws.

Days later, President Donald Trump's administration announced that it would issue guidance on the Johnson Amendment for religious organizations amid the legal back-and-forth, saying it would "continue to protect religious freedom as a fundamental right."

That guidance hadn't come as of July 24, by which point the legal wrangling continued as the plaintiffs formally appealed the dismissal. Their July 7 filing said the decision resulted in "a dismissal no party requested, an agreed resolution undone and Plaintiffs left in the silence they sued to end."

The filing outlined the plaintiff's beliefs that the IRS "pursues disfavored conservative and religious speakers while letting others speak freely."

Religious leaders and organizations across the ideological spectrum have condemned what they describe as outsized scrutiny of their allies and institutions while overlooking tax infractions on the other side of the aisle.

In April, the Rev. Jamal Bryant, senior pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Stonecrest, Georgia, condemned to USA TODAY what he said was a "double standard" when it comes to the Johnson Amendment, saying "it is very selective, how it has been used in American discourse."

The rhetorical and legal battle over the Johnson Amendment leaves religious institutions with uncertainty about what political involvement the Trump administration will and won't allow before the November elections.

The Rev. Jamal Bryant, speaking in 2025 in Montgomery, Alabama, said the Johnson Amendment "is very selective, how it has been used in American discourse." JAKE CRANDALL/USA TODAY NETWORK

Complaints, but rare enforcement over Johnson Amendment history

Though it's been around for more than 70 years, the Johnson Amendment – named after former President Lyndon B. Johnson, who introduced it when he was serving as U.S. Senate majority leader – has rarely been enforced.

A New York church did lose its tax-exempt status after it took out newspaper advertisements to discourage Christians from supporting former President Bill Clinton in the 1992 election. A court rejected the church's First Amendment arguments, and the church also lost its case on appeal.

The decades since have seen myriad churches and religious leaders wade into the political realm.

According to religion watchdog groups, those efforts have at times crossed a legal line.

Among them is the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which has filed scores of complaints to the IRS about alleged Johnson Amendment violations over the years. In June, for example, it asked the agency to investigate Sheridan Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after Pastor Jackson Lahmeyer said supporters could pick up campaign signs for his since-dropped congressional bid at the church.

Chris Line, the foundation's legal counsel, told USA TODAY in March that alleged Johnson Amendment violations do seem more common in conservative churches, though he said it's "not an insignificant issue on the Democratic side either." The organization previously criticized Bryant for what it characterized as his church's efforts to secure votes for then-Vice President Kamala Harris ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation was not alone in doing so. Americans United for Separation of Church and State also criticized Bryant for denouncing former Republican U.S. Senate candidate Herschel Walker from the pulpit in 2022. The Trinity Foundation, too, alleged that one of Bryant's Instagram posts endorsed U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Georgia, in the 2022 election.

Leaders say faith, not criticism, shapes decision-making

Bryant was one of several religious leaders who told USA TODAY they see it as imperative for faith to influence other areas of believers' lives, including politics. "Our responsibility is to interpret the times and to speak to the time," Bryant said.

In a February opinion article for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Bryant wrote that the Black church has historically been a space for "both worship and witness, sanctuaries and staging grounds for social change." In his view, that "dual role" has "often made us targets – surveilled, scrutinized and selectively policed."

> **"We make decisions based on our biblical convictions and our mission and informed by the law to make sure we're compliant."**
>
> **Justin Arnot**
> General counsel, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

In his interview with USA TODAY, he referenced White evangelical leaders and churches that have explicitly aligned with Trump over the years. Among them was the Rev. Franklin Graham, the president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association who has been a steadfast Trump supporter and served on Trump's Religious Liberty Commission.

Justin Arnot, general counsel for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, defended Graham's involvement with the Trump administration in a February interview with USA TODAY.

More religious leaders, in his view, should leverage the influence of both the church and the state in an effort to shape the nation's moral character.

At the same time, Arnot said only a fraction of the organization's work touches the political sphere. He called complaints about such work "dubious," describing efforts by groups such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation as acts of intimidation.

Franklin Graham, delivering a sermon at the Pentagon in 2025 in Arlington, Virginia, has been a steadfast supporter of President Donald Trump. ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

The IRS audited both the association and Samaritan's Purse, a disaster relief nonprofit also led by Graham, in 2012. Graham said "someone in the administration was targeting and attempting to intimidate us" in a letter to then-President Barack Obama about the matter.

Then-acting IRS commissioner Steven Miller resigned around the same time amid a wider controversy surrounding IRS scrutiny of tea party groups.

Ultimately, Arnot said the organization's political decision-making isn't guided by critics.

"We make decisions based on our biblical convictions and our mission and informed by the law to make sure we're compliant, and we're confident that we are," he said.

Johnson Amendment's future could reshape religion, politics

Leaders on all sides of the debate told USA TODAY that the ultimate outcome of the National Religious Broadcasters' lawsuit could have a significant impact on American church and political life moving forward.

Retired United Methodist Church Bishop Julius C. Trimble said opening the door for political money to influence churches could limit what he described as faith communities' prophetic and unifying role in society.

Line similarly feared that churches could "just turn into super PACs" if they are permitted to endorse political candidates as tax-exempt entities. He also expressed concern that political groups could attempt to be redesignated as a church for tax benefits, given that the IRS does not have a specific definition of what counts as a "church."

On the other hand, Arnot said the Johnson Amendment as it currently stands has negative constitutional and financial implications for religious organizations.

"The threat of revocation chills not only the speech, but it potentially chills the giving," Arnot said. In his view, the since-tossed settlement would have simply compelled the IRS "not to enforce it [the Johnson Amendment] in random or arbitrary ways against houses of worship."

Church voter guides, registration drives before midterms

As the midterms draw closer, religious leaders and organizations are making their own decisions about the extent to which they want to get involved as the battle over the Johnson Amendment continues.

The United Church of Christ created a toolkit to support "nonpartisan faithful engagement" in the midterms, while a New York church hosted a "Getting Into Good Trouble" voter registration drive in honor of the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis, who was among the 13 original Freedom Riders beaten and jailed for their civil rights advocacy in the 1960s.

The United Methodist Church, too, has long offered resources and allowed individual churches to host voter registration drives to boost civic participation. UMC leaders pointed to the denomination's Social Principles, which are established by the church's general conference and are not church law, drawing a line between partisan political activity and necessary engagement with social justice issues.

"Some people see it as right versus left when I think ... we see it from the standpoint of what's right versus what is wrong," Trimble said.

Contributing: Angele Latham, The Tennessean

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Federal officials probe video showing apparent sea lion attack

Natalie Neysa Alund
USA TODAY

Federal wildlife authorities are investigating after a video appeared to show a man attacking a protected sea lion at a beach in Southern California.

The video appears to show a man wearing a T-shirt and shorts approaching a sea lion resting on a seawall and kicking the animal while another person can be heard laughing in the background.

The footage then appears to show the person attempting to kick the sea lion again as the animal retreats from its resting spot.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement is "investigating reports of a video on social media that shows an interaction between an individual and sea lion, allegedly in La Jolla Cove," the agency said in a social media post on Friday, July 24.

"In the video, the individual appears to be kicking the sea lion. "This is an ongoing investigation, and we cannot provide further details at this time."

USA TODAY reached out to NOAA for more information.

'Disgusting act of animal cruelty is unacceptable'

La Jolla Cove, about 13 miles northwest of downtown San Diego, is a popular destination for its scenic coastal views and protected sea lion population.

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria said he watched the video and asked local law enforcement to review the footage as well.

"This disgusting act of animal cruelty is unacceptable," Gloria wrote in a post on X.

"We must protect our wildlife."

In a comment posted on Instagram, the San Diego Police Department confirmed federal officials are investigating the incident.

"We appreciate the public's concern and encourage anyone with relevant information to contact the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration," the police department wrote.

According to the Marine Mammal Commission, California sea lions are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, a federal law enacted in 1972.

NOAA says it's illegal to feed, capture, harm, kill or harass sea lions, and anyone who violates it faces potential jail time.

Anyone with information about the incident or any other incident involving a mammal being harmed or harassed is asked to contact the NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement at 800-853-1964.

Young voters may be key in Maine race

After Platner debacle, the under-35s look for hope

Karissa Waddick
USA TODAY

A small bloc of young voters in the country's oldest state – with a median age of 44.8 – could play a pivotal role in one of the most consequential Senate races this year.

As Democrats scramble to replace Graham Platner as their nominee in Maine's Senate race, new polling suggests voters younger than age 35 remain a decisive constituency in the race against Republican Sen. Susan Collins.

Published on July 21, a University of New Hampshire survey found Troy Jackson, the likely replacement for Platner, in a statistical dead heat with Collins. Jackson led among women and young voters, garnering 67% support among voters ages 18-34, the same amount Platner notched in a spring poll against Collins.

An analysis by a group at Tufts University this month ranked Maine among the top states where young voters are likely to sway midterm election outcomes.

Young people ages 18-29 make up a relatively low share of Maine's population. The median age in the state is 44.8, with folks older than 65 comprising 23% of the population, according to 2024 data from the Maine State Economist Office.

But young people in Maine turn out to vote at rates unheard of across the country. In 2024, 60% of young people ages 18-29 voted in Maine, compared with 47% nationally, according to the 2025 State of Democracy in Maine report. During the 2022 midterms, Maine's youth turnout was more than 10 percentage points higher than the national total.

Maine's election laws, including same-day registration and no voter ID requirement, also make it easier for young voters and out-of-state college students to cast a ballot.

Justin Chenette, 35, previously served alongside Jackson as the youngest state senator in Maine history. He said it's still "early to really see where the chips are falling" in the race.

Democratic candidate for governor Troy Jackson, of Maine, speaks during a "Fighting Oligarchy" campaign rally with Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, in Portland, Maine, on May 25. PROVIDED BY AMANDA SABGA

Though the presumptive nominee, Jackson can't officially secure a spot on the ticket until a special nominating convention that was set for July 25. Then, he'll have just more than 100 days to build a campaign against the incumbent, who has served in the Senate for nearly three decades.

Jackson's ability to energize and mobilize young voters to head to the polls could prove critical for Democrats. The party sees Maine's Senate race as a must-win to flip control of the chamber.

"The [Jackson] campaign is going to have to engage all demographics, but young people can absolutely make or break this race," Chenette said.

Tough act to follow

Alison Beyea watched students at Colby College galvanize around the Platner campaign last semester in a way she hadn't seen them react to a political candidate in years.

"The Maine U.S. Senate race is not typically a huge topic of conversation at Colby, but it was all that people talked about this spring," said Beyea, executive director of the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs at the college. "They saw something in the primary that spoke to them about what kind of leadership they wanted."

Platner's virtual campus town hall was at capacity. Hundreds of students turned out to listen to him, even ones who didn't plan to vote for him in the primary, Beyea remembered.

She believes Platner helped cut through their deep disillusionment with the political establishment and offered hope.

"They would consistently talk about the message he gave about how the system wanted to divide them," she said. "That really resonated for students."

Platner's departure from the race, and Jackson's rise as the presumptive nominee, have raised fresh questions about whether Democrats will continue to build on the momentum with young people.

On paper, Jackson is remarkably similar to Platner. Both men come from working-class backgrounds: Platner is an Oyster farmer and Jackson is a logger. Both received support from Sen. Bernie Sanders' grassroots political action group Our Revolution and focused their messages on affordability.

But Jackson has spent decades in Maine politics and is likely to face scrutiny for past socially conservative viewpoints, including his previous anti-gay marriage and anti-abortion stances. It also remains to be seen whether he holds the same charismatic pull Planter had over young voters.

"The policies play a huge part, but I think we have dismissed... the importance of feeling like a candidate makes us feel like we want them to lead," Beyea said.

Chenette views Jackson's gruff persona as a potential asset. Young people, he said, are looking for authenticity.

"That's why you're seeing such a movement toward voices like Troy Jackson and others who are not necessarily the most polished," Chenette said. "They have not tested their responses by a DC consultant."

Amid a shortened campaign, political analysts say Jackson will need to meet young voters where they are: online. Reaching youth through social media is about more than "cool editing and TikTok trends," said Jack Petocz, partnerships director at the advocacy group Gen-Z for Change. That will take off and energize young people to vote, he argued, if the policy platform resonates.

"There seems to be a resonance with young people and candidates who hear and see their concerns, specifically about the economy and about challenging systems that aren't working," said Leela Strong, Newhouse director of the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts.

"In Maine and anywhere else in the country, that seems to be the recipe for connecting with young voters this cycle."

PFAS cleanup

Continued from Page 1A

or removed them altogether.

For decades, the military has extinguished fires using foams containing toxic PFAS. These chemicals can then seep into soil and groundwater, where they persist without breaking down, increasing the chance of certain cancers in people who drink from contaminated wells.

The military did not respond to USA TODAY's request for an estimate of how many people the delays affect, but the tally could easily total tens of thousands of neighbors considering how many sites have been delayed.

The Hyatts, who live down the street from the U.S. Army's Yakima Training Center, had no idea about the delay in their cleanup until USA TODAY called them.

"They do not tell us anything," Brandi Hyatt said.

The only clue that anything changed appeared behind a link buried on the Pentagon's website, where it publishes the cleanup timelines for more than 700 military installations. USA TODAY has compiled those reports – many of them now deleted – going back to 2021, observing at least 1,000 instances where cleanup times changed over the past five years without a formal announcement.

The latest delays, posted in May, are the most drastic, averaging a decade. USA TODAY has gathered the timeline details in a searchable data dashboard.

Firefighters spray PFAS-laden foam to put out a helicopter fire during a training exercise in 2007. Firefighting foams form a "blanket" over liquid fuel that helps extinguish fires quickly. The Pentagon has extended a deadline to stop using the foam to October 2027. PROVIDED BY PATRICK HODGES/U.S. ARMY

Delays start piling up in 2025

Nearly three-quarters of the sites – over 500 – have been delayed at least once, and the delays are growing significantly longer.

USA TODAY's analysis of the now-unavailable documents shows from 2021 to 2024, the military delayed cleanup timelines for a few dozen sites each quarter, usually by just a year or two. Timelines at a handful of sites would even speed up, also typically by a year or so.

Delays suddenly began to pile up in March 2025, when the Pentagon delayed over 150 sites at once. The newest records released, representing cleanup timelines as of September 2025, delayed the target dates for nearly 200 military sites as much as two decades into the future.

These timelines don't even represent when each base's neighbors can expect their property to be safe from forever chemicals. When cleaning up environmental contamination, the military follows the multistep Superfund program laid out by Congress. The timelines the military has been delaying are largely the "remedial investigation" step, which explores how far pollution has spread and how they might repair the damage. The final cleanup can't even begin until they pass these milestones.

Sites with proven contamination

These cleanup delays are happening even at military sites where the Pentagon has publicly confirmed forever chemicals are seeping into local water sources, USA TODAY found.

Water testing shows the chemicals can drain off-base and contaminate private wells and sources of municipal drinking water. Dayton, Ohio; Fort Worth, Texas; and Tucson, Arizona, are just a sampling of the cities that have filed lawsuits against the military claiming PFAS threatens their water sources.

USA TODAY's analysis of available military test results on public and private drinking water shows wells around 73 bases have tested above the current Environmental Protection Agency limit for forever chemicals in drinking water.

All but two of these bases have faced delays to their cleanup process, USA TODAY found.

At South Carolina's McEntire Air National Guard Base, where one-third of water samples have tested above the EPA limit, the cleanup timeline has been delayed nearly a quarter-century from 2029 to 2053.

About 85% of samples at Biddle Air National Guard Base outside Philadelphia have tested above the EPA limit, but its cleanup has been delayed 19 years. And in Yakima, Washington, cleanup was delayed over 13 years even though more than 1,350 water samples taken from the Hyatts' neighbors around the Army's Yakima Training Center have tested higher than the EPA limit.

For Brandi Hyatt, moving into their three-bedroom home on a 2-acre lot felt like a dream come true. The couple and their two kids enjoyed a stream running through the backyard and views of snow-capped mountain peaks in the distance. Plus, the constant convoys of soldiers driving in and out of the base just down the street gave them a sense of security and pride.

Until 2021, when the Army knocked on the Hyatts' door to test their well and found PFAS. Since moving in, she said at least five neighbors have died of cancer, and she developed a thyroid condition.

"This beautiful dream of raising your babies at the end of a sweet cul-de-sac with all these nice old neighbors," Hyatt said, pausing. "To find out that dream is potentially killing you, it's just really hard."

What does the military say?

Dozens of members of Congress have sent letters to the Department of War, formally the Department of Defense, since last fall to express their concern about the delays. In the latest, sent July 21, Sen. Patty Murray, a Democrat from Washington, criticizes not just the delays but the way they've been happening.

"Instead of consulting with community leaders and announcing the delays to the public, the department instead chose to quietly remove the previous cleanup schedule from its website and publish new timelines," Murray wrote. "This is ultimately a violation of trust between military leaders and their surrounding communities."

The Pentagon did not respond to USA TODAY's request for comment in time for publication.

However, an Army spokesperson said schedule changes are a natural part of the environmental cleanup process.

"They reflect ongoing technical work, not a change in our commitment," wrote Lt. Col. Orlandon Howard in an email.

He described protecting drinking water as the first priority at the Yakima Training Center, adding that base officials maintain regular communication with the state and local community.

"The Army updated its timeline when it became evident that updated PFAS data, evolving U.S. EPA standards and site-specific complexity required the Army to perform additional fieldwork and analysis beyond what the earlier published timeline reflected," Howard wrote.

Since the Superfund cleanup process typically takes many years, the military has previously said it's taken "interim actions" such as providing bottled water or installing filtration systems near at least 55 military bases with the worst contamination.

"When our data indicates a risk, we act immediately to cut off that exposure path," Howard wrote, noting the Army has installed 71 in-home filtration systems around the Yakima Training Center, with plans for dozens more. Plus, they're providing bottled water to many of the Hyatts' neighbors still waiting for a filter.

Across the country near Philadelphia, officials at the Biddle Air National Guard Base said the first phase of their investigation is wrapping up. Investigators said more soil and water sampling is required to fill in gaps in their data, but that can't happen until the Air Force awards the base more funding. Meanwhile, its cleanup timeline has been delayed nearly two decades.

"We've been prioritizing interim actions across the nation, and we're doing it at Biddle," said William Myer, Biddle's environmental restoration program manager, at a public meeting held July 16. "We're actively doing a groundwater design to construct a groundwater treatment system."

For the first time, the War Department's quarterly update on May 21 included brief footnotes to explain why each base's timeline was extended, including reasons such as the prioritization of higher-risk sites, a need for additional testing and severe weather.

The Pentagon has also added a note to its website that while the military "strives to maintain original schedules, shifts may occur due to unique factors encountered at some sites."

USA TODAY obtained some of the military's responses to the dozens of elected officials who have expressed concerns about the delays. The department's responses generally echo the Army spokesperson's comments, also blaming tougher EPA regulations and citing factors like funding availability and contractor problems.

How delays affect the community

Near Yakima, Washington, it took the Army nearly four years to install the Hyatts' PFAS filtration system. It was the uncertainty during this "really long, frightening process," that prompted Brandi Hyatt to found Pursue PFAS Free, a community group that gathers and shares information and advocates for clean water around a handful of military bases across the state.

"Everyone deserves to be safe in their homes," she said. "I didn't feel safe in my home anymore, and my neighbors didn't."

Some of her neighbors still aren't safe, years after the contamination was discovered.

Greg Caron, who manages hazardous waste cleanup in the region for the state's ecology department, points out that the 71 filtration systems the Army has installed to date is just half the count of nearby homes whose wells have tested over the EPA limits. His department wants the Army to be more proactive in testing and mitigating the contamination, so Caron said seeing an unannounced 13-year delay is worrisome.

"We felt like the 2028 goal was very optimistic – maybe too overly optimistic," said Caron, who also was unaware of the delay until USA TODAY contacted him. "But any timeline that's a decade long is troubling."

A public review of the cleanup process cannot occur until the military finishes its investigation, Caron added.

"Until those documents are released, the public really has no insight, no view behind the curtain about what the Army is doing, except for what the Army chooses to share," Caron said. "If the Army pushes back those deliverables for a dozen years, then where's the public's opportunity for real participation in this issue that affects them?"

The Army created a quarterly newsletter and PFAS website in response to criticism about poor communication in Yakima. Other sites, like Biddle Air National Guard Base in Pennsylvania, have regular meetings of advisory boards that allow neighbors to meet the military officials leading the cleanup. However, Joseph McGrath, who worked for decades at the Naval Air Station adjoining Biddle, said it's not enough.

"From the day to day, we have no idea what's going on," McGrath told Biddle's restoration manager during the advisory board's July 16 meeting. "I don't see anything on an active level."

Hyatt had stronger words for her interactions with the military.

"The Army just gaslights everybody," she told USA TODAY.

"I love our soldiers," Hyatt said. "But I don't have nice things to say about the way the Army has communicated with us."

She described tense conversations with Army officials where she felt bullied and blamed for the delays holding up the installation of their home filtration system.

"Even when you get the system in, there's still this sense of like, am I safe today?" Hyatt said, adding that a neighbor's filter malfunctioned for months before they discovered the problem.

Now, Hyatt's group wants the Army to truly provide space for her and her neighbors to sit at the decision-making table.

"Stop telling us what you're going to do for us and how good it's going to be, and let us be a part of what's happening," Hyatt said.

Maya Merhige

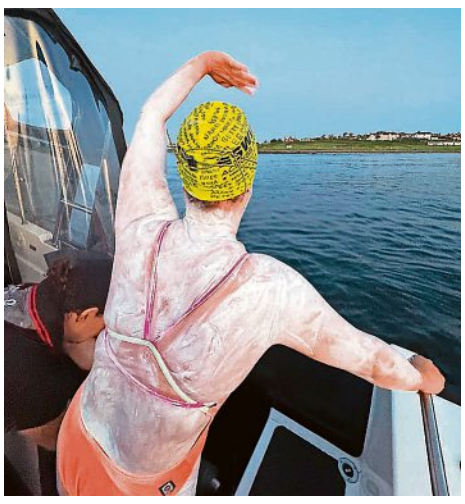
Continued from Page 1A

most difficult open-water swims. The record belongs to Caitlin O'Reilly, who completed the challenge at 20 years, 227 days old.

On July 8, Merhige completed the fifth swim of the challenge, a 21.4-mile crossing of the North Channel from Ireland to Scotland. Battling 50-degree water, powerful tides and jellyfish stings, she finished in 12 hours, 19 minutes and 37 seconds.

This swim held special significance for Merhige: It took place exactly a year after she had major surgery. After she had a ski accident in 2023, doctors discovered a benign tumor on her pancreas that led to several years of hospital visits and surgeries.

"I think it completely changed my perspective and my understanding of what the cancer experience is like," she says. "The fact that I can do this and I'm healthy enough to do this – I shouldn't take advantage of that."



If children can battle through cancer, "then I can most definitely swim another 20 strokes," Maya Merhige says. PROVIDED BY SWIM ACROSS AMERICA

Before Merhige began the Ocean Seven challenge, she became the youngest woman to swim the width of Lake Tahoe at just 13 years old.

She then began the challenge with the Catalina Channel as a freshman in high school, becoming the youngest woman to complete the 20-mile swim at age 14. One year later, she became the youngest person to complete the Molokai Channel swim in Hawaii at age 15.

She followed that by crossing the Cook Strait in New Zealand, the English Channel and the Molokai Channel.

But those feats didn't come easily, she says.

"It took me a long time until maybe a year ago to really be OK with not having a lot of control. … That really scared me at the beginning – the feeling of being so small in such a big body of water."

Each swim must be completed solo and unassisted. Swimmers cannot touch a buoy, the boat or any passengers. Every 30 minutes, Merhige is handed a water bottle on a rope filled with carbohydrates to stay fueled, though even that can be difficult when she begins to feel sick.

Despite the physical challenges, Merhige says, the mental challenge is even greater. "I have swum for a long time, so I know that physically I can. It's much more a mental thing to be like, 'How can I continue doing this and not stress myself out?' "

The Molokai Channel swim was the toughest of the five swims, she says – physically and mentally. She was in the water for 28 hours, nearly twice as long as she and her crew had expected.

"That was the only time I've ever been in the water and been like, 'Why do I do this?' " Merhige says.

But whenever she questions her decision to continue, she reminds herself for whom she is swimming. Before every swim, Merhige writes the names of those who have or are fighting cancer on her swim cap. From family members to friends and even cancer patients she doesn't know, each name serves as a reminder of why she keeps going.

Merhige has two swims remaining to complete the Oceans Seven challenge. She is scheduled to swim the Strait of Gibraltar in August and complete the Tsugaru Strait in Japan next year – both before her 20th birthday.

Before each swim, she'll write the names of cancer patients and survivors across her cap, just as she always does.

"I like to say that I borrow their bravery."

OPINION

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Trump keeps threatening your right to know

Saundra Torry
Opinion contributor

At Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, on June 19, President Donald Trump applauds as he tours the aircraft gifted by Qatar that will be used as Air Force One.
ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS

Subpoenas of several New York Times reporters authorized by President Donald Trump's Justice Department were far more than an attack on reporters. It's an action that affects the rights of people in a free society to know what their government is doing.

It's also more than just a single strike against one news organization. It appears to be part of broader actions by the administration that have harmed press freedom.

At a July 23 hearing in Manhattan on The Times' motion to stop the subpoenas, a federal judge assailed the Department of Justice's actions and told government lawyers: "Either we can quash the subpoenas, or you could withdraw the subpoenas."

The DOJ quickly withdrew them, along with subpoenas for phone records of the reporters, two reporters' spouses and a third's mother. Unfortunately, the Justice Department also stated that "this investigation remains ongoing."

DOJ subpoenas 'violate the constitutional rights' of journalists

On July 8, The Times reported that Trump relied on the older Air Force One jet when he left the NATO summit in Turkey rather than flying his newer, $400 million Air Force One donated by Qatar. Citing "people briefed on the plans," The Times reporters wrote that security officials feared the new jet lacked the necessary defensive features of the older model.

On July 19, Trump said the Qatari jet "has a lot of capability, but as I understand it, in about a month or so, they're going to send it to have it be maxed out."

The federal grand jury's subpoenas of reporters involved was an attempt to discover their confidential sources. Before the hearing, The Times' top newsroom lawyer wrote that the subpoenas "violate the constitutional rights of The Times and its journalists."

There have been other administration actions that reporters say intimidate confidential sources:

● In January, the FBI arrived at the home of Washington Post reporter Hannah Natanson at 6:05 a.m. as part of a probe into accusations that a government contractor illegally revealed classified materials. The FBI seized her cellphone, a smart watch and two computers – one with personal information, including communications with a physician and Natanson's fiancé.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press called this search "unprecedented." Fortunately, a federal judge ruled in February that "an independent judicial review," and not the Justice Department, should examine Natanson's seized materials.

In May, U.S. District Judge Anthony Trenga upheld that ruling, citing the First Amendment that entitles reporters "to some constitutional protection of the confidentiality of their sources." The Justice Department has already charged the federal contractor, but if government investigators can review The Post reporter's phone and computers, they'll discover every source who has given her information.

Much of her reporting was on the Trump administration's cutting the federal workforce. In May, Natanson was part of The Post team that won a Pulitzer Prize.

Many excellent sources want to remain anonymous, which is often how Americans learn about major government actions that would otherwise remain concealed.

Americans deserve 'information ... about the nation's highest office'

● In 2025, Associated Press reporters covering the White House as part of what's known as the "press pool" were restricted from covering the president in several limited locations, including the Oval Office and Air Force One.

The AP also was banned from the White House press pool.

AP's coverage is crucial because its stories appear in scores of newspapers across the United States and internationally. Why were its journalists banned? When Trump issued an executive order to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, the AP still referred to the Gulf of Mexico, its internationally recognized name.

In April 2025, U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden, appointed by President Trump in his first term, issued a preliminary injunction ordering the administration to allow AP reporters back into the Oval Office, the Air Force One and other White House places: "If the Government opens its doors to some journalists ... it cannot then shut those doors to other journalists because of their viewpoints."

Two months later, a federal appeals panel delayed McFadden's order to lift the ban, and last July the full court of appeals upheld the delay.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the White House Correspondents' Association and 46 news organizations are working to help AP regain full access to the press pool so it can provide "information to the public about the nation's highest office."

'Targeted at viewpoints that the President does not like'

● After complaining that National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were "very unfair" and "very biased," Trump issued an executive order cutting off their federal funding.

In March, U.S. District Judge Randolph Moss ruled the "government action is targeted at viewpoints that the President does not like and seeks to squelch. ... The First Amendment does not tolerate viewpoint discrimination and retaliation of this type."

The judge blocked federal agencies from enforcing the president's order to cease funding.

But that may not get federal dollars back for NPR and PBS because Trump also called on Congress to cut funding, and House and Senate Republicans did so a year ago.

Stephen J. Adler, chairman of the Reporters Committee, which defends the First Amendment rights of reporters and news organizations, said how dangerous it is for reporters to be intimidated: "Press freedom is about the rights of the public – to learn how their community and country are being run and to make informed decisions based on independent reporting. When the public's right to know is crushed, as the Trump administration is trying to do with its subpoenas against The New York Times, all of us suffer irreparable harm, as does the freedom upon which this nation is built."

Saundra Torry is a former USA TODAY editorial writer and a past chairwoman of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

Junk science drives wrongful convictions. That's not justice.

Van Jones and David Safavian
Opinion contributors

Anyone who has watched an episode of "Law & Order" knows that prosecutors often rely on forensic experts dressed in white lab coats. They tell juries about microscopic hair comparisons, bite mark analysis, bloodstain patterns and other science-y stuff that's supposedly conclusive proof of guilt.

Except, too often, it's not.

Much of this so-called evidence is little more than the unsubstantiated opinion of someone with a stake in the outcome. Yes, DNA is reliable (if collected properly). Too often, however, junk science is dressed up as factual evidence for jurors who don't know any better.

In real life, however, courts accept phony forensics, often with troubling consequences.

'Shaken baby syndrome' and the junk science courts still lean on

In 2023, Nick Flannery was charged with assault and child endangerment after his infant son, Arlo, suddenly collapsed in a Cincinnati suburb.

In the emergency room, Arlo's doctors found bleeding in the baby's brain and suggested it was caused by "shaken baby syndrome."

Arlo had no bruises, no fractures, no skull injuries and no signs of neglect. His parents were the sole caregivers, with no history of abuse. There was no evidence whatsoever. It was the proverbial dog that didn't bark. The allegation of shaken baby syndrome nevertheless set off a chain reaction.

The Flannery children were taken away. Independent medical experts reviewing the case found that a preexisting condition, which might have originated at birth and worsened over time, likely led to Arlo's bleeding and collapse.

Health records also showed unusual head growth and symptoms consistent with an ongoing medical condition, rather than abusive trauma.

Intent on taking the case to a jury, prosecutors will argue that Arlo Flannery's injuries were from shaken baby syndrome, despite it being a long-disputed medical theory.

If convicted, Nick Flannery could face 12 years in prison.

Unreliable science contributes to 52% of wrongful convictions

The Flannery case is just one of many where unproven scientific theories are being used in criminal prosecutions.

Robert Roberson was just days away from a scheduled Oct. 16 execution for the alleged murder of his 2-year-old daughter through what prosecutors were simply convinced was shaken baby syndrome.

On Oct. 9, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals stopped Roberson's execution because state law required convictions to be reopened if previously used forensic evidence had since been discredited or proven scientifically inaccurate.

Roberson will likely get a new trial, with the lead detective planning to testify about how unreliable shaken baby syndrome evidence is.

A week. That's how close the justice system came to an irreversible mistake.

Others, such as Josh Burns in Michigan and Andrew Roark in Texas, served

In 2003, a Texas court sentenced Robert Roberson to death after he was convicted of killing his 2-year-old daughter, Nikki, by shaking her so forcefully that he caused irreversible brain damage and death from "shaken baby syndrome." Roberson is on death row while his case is under review.
PROVIDED BY ILANA PANICH-LINSMAN FOR THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

years behind bars after being found guilty of shaking their kids. Their convictions were reversed by appellate courts due to the unreliable nature of the science used to convict them.

To work, our justice system should depend on reliable, validated evidence rather than unproven theories and junk science. Wrongful convictions rob innocent people of their freedom, drain millions in taxpayer dollars through protracted litigation and unnecessary incarceration, and force the government to pay for the substantial settlements required to redress when those convictions are overturned.

The Kentucky Innocence Project reports that junk science contributed to 52% of wrongful convictions in the cases they have reviewed, and that false forensic evidence was determined to be a contributing factor to 24% of all wrongful convictions nationally.

But the most significant impact of using phony forensics is probably on public confidence in our courts.

What states need to do

For our system of justice to work, state courts must follow the lead of federal courts by adopting the standards outlined in Federal Rule of Evidence 702, which require forensic testimony to be based on "reliable scientific principles and methods." This rule empowers judges to filter out flawed evidence before it taints the jury.

Unfortunately, vigorous validation happens infrequently in state courts. That's why it is more important than ever for states to adopt evidence-based standards to ensure that only credible and vetted information is given to juries.

Our Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that the courts were fair to every defendant. It is why we have jury trials in the first place. But the system only works when jurors are presented with trusted information rooted in sound science.

In "Law & Order," the right person is usually found guilty. In real life, that's not always the case.

If we are to have true justice, judges must be empowered to set a high bar to screen out junk science and protect the innocent. If states want to ensure that they get it right, they should adopt the approach set out in Federal Rule of Evidence 702.

Van Jones is an attorney, criminal justice advocate and TV personality. David Safavian is an attorney and a conservative activist.

USA TODAY

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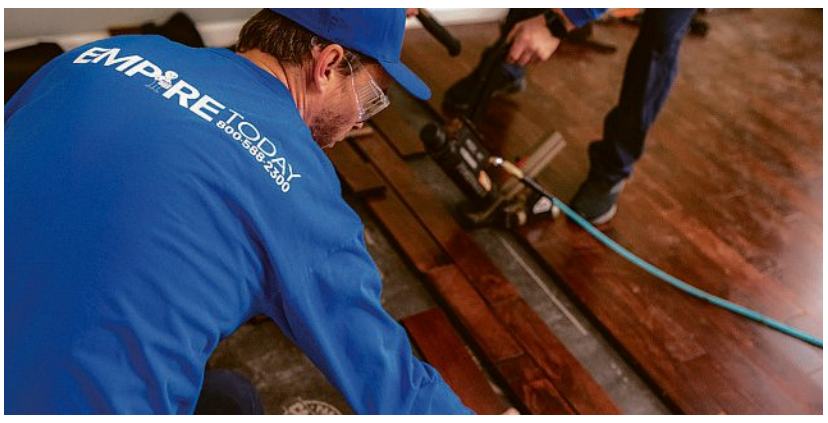

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Cracker Barrel sells Maple Street Biscuit Co., closes sites

Fast-growing Biscuit Belly acquires 35 Maple Street locations. **Page 3B**

You can check the headlines from your home state or city

We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 4B**

BACK TO SCHOOL

SHOP TAX-FREE IN THESE STATES

AT LEAST 18 STATES OFFER CHANCE TO SAVE MONEY

Betty Lin-Fisher
USA TODAY

Psst! We know the kids don't want to hear "back to school" talk, but sales tax holidays in some states can help parents and caretakers save money on school supplies.

Some states even expand it further and offer tax-free shopping on a variety of items on which shoppers of all ages can save.

Saving money is particularly important this year as shoppers continue to say they are stressed about finances and rising costs.

In July and August, 18 states have specific sales-tax holidays, when certain purchases made for school are tax-free. The first state was Mississippi, July 10-12. Connecticut is the last state with a tax holiday, Aug. 16 to Aug. 22.

What are sales tax holidays?

Most of the tax-free shopping days give a break on sales tax for items related to school like clothing, shoes, electronics and supplies. One state, Massachusetts, extends the sales tax holiday to include more than back-to-school items. But there are some changes from previous years.

Ohio is reverting to a three-day sales tax holiday instead of a 14-day tax holiday that in 2025 included nearly all tangible property costing $500 or less. Virginia's sales tax holiday includes items for hurricane and emergency preparation. New Jersey has permanently repealed its sales tax holiday.

And this year, Illinois is bringing back a school supply state sales tax holiday for the first time in 10 years.

USA TODAY has compiled a full list of participating states, details of what is tax-free and a snapshot of how shoppers are feeling.

Back-to-school shopping has already begun

More shoppers began their back-to-school shopping by early June than in past years, according to the National Retail Federation (NRF). About one-third or 32% of back-to-school shoppers said they had already started browsing and buying by early June – the highest percentage since the NRF first started asking the question in 2018. In 2025, 26% of shoppers said they started shopping in June.

According to NRF's annual June survey, all age groups said they had begun the early shopping, but younger generations were leading the trend. Gen Z (40%) and millennial (42%) shoppers were the biggest groups to shop early and had the largest jump year over year. In 2025, 31% of both Gen Z and millennial shoppers were shopping early in June.

Only 27% of Gen X shoppers and 20% of baby boomers said they had started their back-to-school shopping in June, compared with 24% and 18% in 2025.

Consumers may be more prepared to do their back-to-school shopping, the NRF said, because 44% said they had already received their school supply lists as of early June. That compares with 38% who said the same in 2025.

Sales tax holidays help shoppers' wallets

Data from PwC, a professional services firm, shows families expect to spend nearly $922 in the back-to-school

See SHOPPING, Page 2B

ILLUSTRATION BY MORGAN RINGEL/USA TODAY NETWORK; GETTY IMAGES

Jean Hullihan retired at 67 in 2023 and draws a monthly Social Security benefit of $4,200. Hullihan worked as an intelligence analyst at the National Counterterrorism Center. She also worked abroad.
MATT STONE/USA TODAY NETWORK

Measure to save Social Security faces pushback

AARP group hits back at 'fast track' measure

Medora Lee
USA TODAY

Social Security is facing across-the-board benefit cuts in six years, and older Americans want solutions, not opaquely operating committees, AARP says.

A bipartisan group of senators has introduced legislation to fast-track any Social Security-saving bills that could shore up the dwindling trust fund that supplements payroll taxes and keep benefits 100% intact.

A bipartisan, seven-member Social Security Advisory Board would draft a bill to keep the program's trust funds solvent for at least the next half-century. The Protecting Retirement Opportunities and Maintaining Income Security for Everyone, or PROMISE, Act would then be introduced in the House and Senate by congressional leaders before being considered by committees, which could hold hearings and revise the legislation.

Some prominent think tanks such as the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Committee for a Responsible Federal

See SOCIAL SECURITY, Page 2B

Parents embracing new baby registry ideas amid costs

Many expecting fewer gifts, survey finds

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

With a basic crib often costing around $200 and some strollers priced at $500 or more, many families are rethinking how they build baby registries and prepare for a newborn.

A new survey from pregnancy and parenting company What to Expect found that many parents are scaling back their expectations for traditional baby registries, with more planning to buy expensive essentials themselves and turning to alternatives such as gift cards, group gifting and secondhand items.

The survey of 2,099 pregnant women and mothers with babies younger than 6 months found 59% expect to receive fewer baby shower gifts because of rising costs. Nearly 8 in 10 moms said they feel uncomfortable asking friends and family to purchase expensive registry items, while 64% expect to buy most baby gear on their own.

Instead of relying solely on a registry, many parents are rethinking what support looks like, prioritizing flexible gifts, practical help and only the items they truly need.

Parents are embracing gift cards and practical support

Rather than filling registries with products alone, more parents are asking for gift cards, cash funds and services that can help after the baby arrives.

According to the survey, requests for store and restaurant gift cards have increased 36% since 2024, while cash funds are up 24%. Requests for services, including meal delivery, house cleaning and postpartum support, have risen 22%. Nearly 1 in 6 moms now prioritize registries that include non-product gifts.

Those options allow loved ones to contribute whatever amount fits their budget while giving new parents flexibility to purchase necessities when they need them.

See REGISTRY, Page 2B

Registry platforms are increasingly allowing multiple people to contribute toward a single item. The survey found 51% of gift-givers used group gifting in 2026, a 287% increase from 2024.

Saving money is particularly important this year as shoppers continue to say they are stressed about finances and rising costs. TONY GIBERSON/ USA TODAY NETWORK

Shopping

Continued from Page 1B

season, and nearly half plan to spend more than they did last year.

"Back-to-school spending is about commitment, not discretion," Kelly Pedersen, PwC's global retail leader, told USA TODAY. "Parents aren't looking for a reason to skip the list – they're looking for ways to absorb a bill they know is coming."

That's exactly where tax holidays fit in, Pedersen said.

"Tax-free weekends are exactly the kind of date a budget-conscious parent has already circled," he said. "It's not about spending less. It's about being smart with a commitment that doesn't go away."

Clothing and shoes are the largest line item in the PwC survey at $278.

"Clothing and shoes have historically been the categories that have benefited most during tax holiday windows, and those are precisely the categories families are prioritizing most," Pedersen said.

What's different this season is just how deliberately parents are hunting for those windows, Pedersen said: 54% of families in the survey cited sales and promotions as a top purchase factor. Seventy-three percent are using AI somewhere in their shopping journey, often specifically to compare prices and time purchases.

The spending also doesn't stop when school starts, Pedersen said. Families expect to spend another $635 every month after that on fees, meals and activity costs.

"Back-to-school isn't a seasonal event; it's the opening of a year-round financial relationship," he said. "The families doing it best are the ones showing up with a plan."

Rising prices still a top concern

But high costs continue to worry shoppers.

"Prices are still top of mind, though consumers remain more optimistic than they were four years ago when inflation was at its peak," the NRF said in a back-to-school blog post on its website July 7. "This year 78% of shoppers expect to see higher prices on back-to-school items this school season, compared with 84% in 2022."

But there's a difference in how households in different income brackets are viewing prices, the NRF said. Those earning more than $100,000 a year "have seen a steeper drop in concern since 2022's higher inflation and continue to drive spending," it said. "Lower-income households, while less concerned than four years ago, remain worried about prices and are looking for ways to stretch their dollars."

Retailers are taking note and will have sale promotions all summer, the retail group said. About one-third of back-to-school shoppers told the NRF they typically plan their shopping around summer sales. Families also told the group for its survey that if back-to-school items are pricier than expected, they will be doing more comparative shopping or checking for the items at discount stores.

"As families prepare for the back-to-school season, affordability remains a top priority. Retailers are focused on delivering value this back-to-school season, offering competitive prices, promotions and discounts to help families manage the cost of these purchases," Mark Mathews, the NRF's chief economist and executive director of research, told USA TODAY.

Sales tax holidays help consumers maximize their savings, he said.

"These tax-free shopping events benefit both shoppers and retailers."

What's tax-free in each state?

Here's a list of participating states and what's tax-free, according to the Federation of Tax Administrators and additional reporting by USA TODAY. Rules and dates vary by state, so check your state's website for the most updated information. In some instances, local taxes may also still apply.

Five states don't charge sales tax year-round: Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire and Oregon, according to the Federation of Tax Administrators. Some municipalities in Alaska do charge sales tax.

Arkansas: Aug 1-2

- Clothing and shoes: $100 or less per item, clothing accessories: $50 or less per item.
- School, art and instructional supplies and electronic devices for school are tax-free with no cap on price.

Connecticut: Aug. 16-22

- Clothing and footwear less than $300; cleated shoes and backpacks are newly added as tax-free.
- A new state law exempts non-electronic school supplies from sales tax year-round.

Florida: Through Aug. 20

- Learning aids, such as flash cards, puzzle books and puzzles: $30 or less.
- School supplies: $50 or less per item.
- Clothing, footwear, accessories: $100 or less per item.
- Computers and accessories: $1,500 or less.

Illinois: Aug. 7-16

- Clothing and footwear: $125 and less.
- Eligible school supplies including book bags, calculators and other items used for studying are not subject to $125 threshold.

Iowa: Aug. 7-8

- Clothing, footwear: $100 or less per item.

Maryland: Aug. 9-15

- Clothing, footwear: $100 or less per item.
- Backpacks: The first $40 of a backpack/ book bag purchase is tax-free.
- Accessory items, except for backpacks, are not included in the tax-free holiday.

Massachusetts: Aug. 8-9

- Eligible retail items bought for personal use costing $2,500 or less (not limited to school supplies).
- There are several exceptions when tax still applies, including meals, motor vehicles and boats, gas and electricity, tobacco, marijuana or alcoholic beverages, and any single item with a price more than $2,500.

Missouri: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing: $100 or less per item.
- School supplies: $50 or less per item.
- Computers and peripheral devices: $1,500.
- Computer software: $350 or less.
- Graphic calculators: $150 or less.

New Mexico: July 31-Aug. 2

- School supplies: $30 and less per item.
- Clothing or shoes: $100 or less per item.
- Desktop, laptop, tablet and notebook computers: $1,000.
- Related computer hardware: $500 per item.

New York

New York does not have a sales tax holiday, but year-round in what's called the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District, there is no sales tax for clothing and footwear that costs $110 or less. The MCTD consists of New York City and the counties of Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester.

Ohio: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing: $75 or less per item.
- School supplies: $20 or less per item.
- School instructional materials: $20 or less per item.

Oklahoma: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing or footwear: $100 or less per item.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania does not have a sales tax holiday, but year-round it does not charge sales tax for clothing and certain footwear.

South Carolina: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing, shoes and accessories.
- School supplies.
- Computers, printers, earbuds and headphones.

Tennessee: July 31-Aug. 2

- Clothing and shoes: $100 or less per item.
- School supplies: $100 or less per item.
- Computers, including laptops and tablets: $1,500 or less per item.

Texas: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing and shoes: $100 or less per item.
- Backpacks: $100 or less per item.
- School supplies: $100 or less per item.

Virginia: Aug. 7-9

- Clothing and shoes: $100 or less per item.
- School supplies: $20 or less per item.
- Portable generator: $1,000 or less per item.
- Gas-powered chainsaws: $350 or less per item.
- Other specified hurricane preparedness items: $60 or less per item.
- Qualifying Energy Star and WaterSense products for noncommercial home or personal use: $2,500 or less per item.

West Virginia: July 31-Aug. 3

- Clothing: $125 or less per item.
- Laptop or tablet computers: $500 or less per item.
- School instruction material: $20 or less per item.
- School supplies: $50 or less per item.

Social Security

Continued from Page 1B

Budget support the move to jump-start talks to keep Social Security solvent.

BPC endorsed the proposed legislation as a "serious bipartisan process to break the status quo of inaction." The CRFB said it hoped the proposal "jumpstarts a much-needed process to secure Social Security."

AARP "strongly" opposes the bill, however. The nonprofit, nonpartisan advocate for 125 million Americans ages 50 and up says Congress urgently needs to address Social Security's finances, but there's no reason for lawmakers to farm out that work to another body as it would in the PROMISE Act.

"We strongly object to fast-tracking Social Security changes through Congress," AARP Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer Nancy LeaMond wrote in a July 21 letter addressed to Sen. Dick Durbin, the Democratic whip from Illinois, and Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-Louisiana. Durbin and Cassidy are among the lawmakers who introduced the PROMISE Act proposal.

How would the PROMISE Act work?

The PROMISE Act would create an "independent, bipartisan" Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB) to develop and send a base bill to Congress that would ensure the Social Security trust funds have enough money for at least 50 years.

Majority leaders of the Senate and the House, or, if not, any member of Congress could introduce the base bill, which would then be referred to the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee for a chance to hold hearings and amend it.

The committees would vote, or report, on the base bill. If they don't, the bill would automatically be placed on the Senate and House calendars.

The majority leaders of the Senate and House could move the bill forward, as could any other member of Congress. Similarly, anyone in Congress could offer amendments after the motion to proceed.

Finally, the Senate and House would vote on the bill after 100 hours of consideration. Final passage would require a three-fifths vote in the Senate and a majority vote in the House.

"Our bipartisan proposal opens Congress to debate this issue in a transparent, fair, and bipartisan way," Durbin said in a release. "We were elected to solve problems – and there's no greater problem than the solvency and future of Social Security."

Why does AARP oppose the bill?

Though Durbin touts transparency, AARP said the bill offers the opposite. It said the PROMISE Act limits debate and amendments, and that could allow lawmakers to cut Social Security payments.

"Strengthening Social Security should happen through regular order, in full public view, with openness and transparency – rather than through a process that limits the type of amendments and sets arbitrary procedural deadlines to short-circuit the debate," said Nancy LeaMond, AARP's chief advocacy and engagement officer.

The bill calls for the advisory board's proposal to be introduced in Congress by Sept. 17 or the first day after that when the House and Senate are in session, she said. Lawmakers could then hold hearings and amend the SSAB plan but would not need to vote to advance the measure out of key congressional committees, as is typical for federal legislation.

Instead, if lawmakers don't vote by Nov. 9, the bill would move straight to the House and Senate floors – during a post-election "lame-duck session" of Congress "when departing members are completely unaccountable to voters," LeaMond said.

Among her other objections to the bill, she argues that it caps the time to consider, amend and debate the bill at 100 hours and includes language that limits the types of amendments allowed.

"If every other bill in Congress goes through regular order, why would something as important as Social Security get a special process that cuts off debate, that limits the kind of amendments, that limits the kind of things you can talk about?" said Bill Sweeney, AARP's senior vice president for government affairs. "To us, that just doesn't make sense."

AARP opposes other bills that create Social Security commissions

AARP also said it opposes two other bills that would create commissions to address Social Security's long-term solvency:

- One House bill, sponsored by Reps. Tom Cole, R-Oklahoma, and Tom Suozzi, D-New York, creates a 13-member commissiontasked with providing recommendations and legislation to Congress on how to shore up Social Security's finances. That bill would allow a proposed plan to move forward on an expedited, up-or-down vote. Individual members of Congress would not be able to offer amendments, AARP said.
- Another proposal would create a fiscal commission to reduce the national debt and annual deficits and shore up trust funds dedicated not just for Social Security but also for Medicare and the nation's highways. But "Social Security is a self-financed system that does not contribute a penny to the national debt, and Congress should not put it in the crosshairs of unrelated budget debates," LeaMond said. "Instead, any changes to Social Security should focus on the financial and retirement security of the American people."

What should Congress do instead?

Social Security provides retirement benefits to 71 million Americans to give them some financial security. It's "a promise: that after a lifetime of hard work, you will receive the money you have earned," LeaMond said. "Keeping that promise is one of Congress's most solemn responsibilities."

"If regular order is the gold standard for routine legislative matters, it certainly should be the standard for something as important as Social Security," LeaMond said, noting that the last time Social Security approached trust fund depletion, in the early 1980s, there were no shortcuts.

Registry

Continued from Page 1B

Group gifting helps cover expensive essentials

High-ticket purchases, such as strollers, travel systems and nursery furniture, remain among the biggest expenses for new parents. However, registry platforms are increasingly allowing multiple people to contribute toward a single item.

The survey found 51% of gift-givers used group gifting in 2026, a 287% increase from 2024.

That feature allows expectant parents to include costly essentials on their registries without asking one person to cover the full price.

More families are choosing experiences over presents

Some families are replacing traditional baby showers with "nesting parties," where friends and relatives help prepare meals, organize the nursery or tackle household tasks before the baby arrives.

What to Expect found nesting parties have grown 58% in popularity since 2024. Moms are also 80% more likely to skip creating a registry altogether in favor of asking loved ones to help with practical tasks, such as meal trains or setting up the nursery.

Secondhand shopping and smaller registries gain popularity

To stretch their budgets, two-thirds of moms said they're purchasing more secondhand baby items than they otherwise would because of higher costs. Experts still recommend buying certain safety-related products, including car seats, cribs and crib mattresses, new.

Parents are also taking a more minimalist approach. The average registry has declined from 58 items in 2024 to 54 in 2026, and 58% of moms said they're intentionally trying to get by with less by focusing on multipurpose items and skipping products they may not use.

Millions of eggs recalled due to salmonella risk

Midwest Poultry Services issued the action July 22

Greta Cross
USA TODAY

Midwest Poultry Services recalled nearly 1.6 million dozen white shell eggs and brown cage-free shell eggs on July 22 due to potential salmonella contamination. PROVIDED BY U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Nearly 1.6 million dozen white-shell and brown-shell eggs have been recalled due to potential salmonella contamination.

Midwest Poultry Services L.P. issued a recall on July 22 for nearly 1.6 million dozen white and brown cage-free eggs from Texas due to potential Salmonella enteritidis contamination, according to a Food and Drug Administration recall report.

As of July 22, Midwest Poultry Services was not aware of any illnesses related to the eggs.

The company identified the issue through proactive environmental monitoring practices and root cause analysis, according to the recall report. The company was not distributing fresh eggs from its Texas farms as of July 22.

Here's what to know about the egg recall:

What eggs are recalled?

The recalled white and brown cage-free eggs have an identifying code printed on the left or right sides of the carton in date-coding ink. Only the codes P-1950 or 0840962 with a Julian date between 157 and 184 are recalled, according to the report.

Where were the recalled eggs sold?

The recalled eggs were sold in Kroger stores in Texas and Louisiana, Brookshire Grocery stores in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi, and at other smaller retail outlets, according to the recall report.

The eggs were also shipped to foodservice and retailers in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, the report states.

What to do if you own the recalled eggs

Consumers are urged to avoid consumption of the eggs and return the products to their original place of purchase for a full refund, according to the recall report. Consumers with questions should contact Midwest Poultry Services at 574-405-9531 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. ET Monday through Friday.

Symptoms of salmonella poisoning

Symptoms of salmonella poisoning usually start six hours to six days after ingesting the bacteria. The most common symptoms are diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While most healthy people can recover in four to seven days without treatment, some vulnerable groups, including children younger than 5, adults 65 and older, and those with weakened immune systems, may experience more severe illness that requires medical treatment or hospitalization.

If you display any of these more serious symptoms, the CDC advises contacting your health care professional:

- Diarrhea and a fever higher than 102 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Diarrhea for more than three days that is not improving.
- Bloody diarrhea.
- So much vomiting that you cannot keep liquids down.
- Signs of dehydration, such as not urinating much, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up.

Contributing: Mary Walrath-Holdridge

Greta Cross is a national trending reporter at USA TODAY.

Story idea? Email her at gcross@usatoday.com.

Cracker Barrel sells Maple Street Biscuit Co., closes sites

Gabe Hauari
USA TODAY

Cracker Barrel is selling Maple Street Biscuit Co.
JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Cracker Barrel has sold its Maple Street Biscuit Co. brand and 35 restaurants to Biscuit Belly LLC and will close 16 locations of the fast-casual breakfast chain.

The move comes less than a year after Cracker Barrel closed 14 Maple Street locations in September 2025 because they "simply didn't meet our financial expectations," the company told USA TODAY in a statement at the time, while thanking customers for their patronage.

Cracker Barrel acquired Maple Street Biscuit Co. in 2019 for $36 million. The breakfast chain was founded in Jacksonville, Florida, in 2012, and serves a variety of biscuits and other breakfast foods. At the time of the acquisition, Maple Street had 28 company-owned locations and five franchised locations across seven states.

In a separate move, Cracker Barrel also completed a sale-leaseback deal involving 26 company-owned locations. That means Cracker Barrel sold the locations to an investor and immediately leased them back. Cracker Barrel said these transactions will generate approximately $77 million in net proceeds.

Biscuit Belly plans to expand to 60-plus locations by end of 2028

Biscuit Belly said in a news release the acquisition of the 35 Maple Street Biscuit Co. locations "will accelerate the company's expansion across the Southeast and bring Biscuit Belly to over 60 units by the end of 2028."

According to the news release, Biscuit Belly will convert the Maple Street Biscuit Company locations to the Biscuit Belly brand over the next 18-24 months. The conversions will begin immediately, starting with locations in greater Cincinnati and Richmond, Virginia.

"Acquiring an iconic brand like Maple Street, one of the original gourmet biscuit sandwich concepts, was not on my 2026 bingo card," said Chad Coulter, cofounder and CEO of Biscuit Belly, in the news release. "Two of the biggest headwinds that growing brands encounter are the time required to find and build locations, and the difficulty of finding great teams. When we looked at Maple Street's geography, footprints, and established teams, a light bulb went off."

Biscuit Belly opened its first location in 2019, according to the company.

ASK JOHNNY

You should use your PTO intentionally

Johnny C. Taylor Jr.
Columnist
USA TODAY

Johnny C. Taylor Jr. tackles your workplace questions each week for USA TODAY. Taylor is president and CEO of SHRM, the world's largest trade association of human resources professionals, and author of "Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval."

Question: I'm feeling burned out and know I need time off, but in my workplace, being constantly available seems to be valued. I worry that taking PTO could hurt how I'm perceived, especially with advancement opportunities in play. How do I decide if it's worth it to take some time off? – Rylan

Answer: In most cases, the answer is yes. Taking the paid time off you've earned is part of sustaining strong performance, not a sign you're less committed. The key is using it intentionally and responsibly.

At SHRM, we're seeing unprecedented levels of employee burnout, particularly among younger workers and managers. That's concerning because burnout doesn't just affect individuals. It reduces engagement, innovation, decision-making, and ultimately business performance. Smart employers recognize that rest and recovery aren't rewards for working hard. They're investments in sustaining high performance.

That's why I talk about work/life integration rather than work/life balance. The goal isn't a perfect 50/50 split. Real life doesn't work that way. The goal is finding a sustainable rhythm where work and personal responsibilities can coexist without one consistently overwhelming the other. That might mean stepping away for a doctor's appointment and making up the time later, or leaving early for your child's recital and finishing a project after they're asleep. Building that flexibility into your routine before burnout sets in makes you better equipped to handle the inevitable demands of both work and life.

That said, taking PTO also comes with responsibilities. Your team carries your workload while you're away, so plan your time off as thoughtfully as you would any important project. When possible, avoid scheduling extended absences during critical business periods. Communicate early, make sure your work is covered, and leave your colleagues with clear information about what they may need while you're gone. When you prepare well, your absence shouldn't create unnecessary stress for everyone else.

If your organization genuinely discourages employees from using earned PTO despite saying it values well-being, pay attention to that. A culture that expects people to perform at their best while discouraging the recovery that makes high performance possible isn't sustainable. It's worth asking whether that's an environment where you can continue to grow and build a long-term career.

My best advice is this: Use your PTO the way high performers use every other resource – intentionally. Plan, communicate, and leave your team set up for success. The best leaders I know never apologize for taking time off. They prepare so well that the work continues without disruption. That kind of planning doesn't hurt your chances for advancement. If anything, it demonstrates the judgment, professionalism, and leadership organizations value most.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of USA TODAY.

Trump $1 gold-colored coin generates buzz

Faith Wakefield
USA TODAY

An illustration of a new coin, featuring President Donald Trump, released by the Department of Treasury.
PROVIDED BY UNITED STATES MINT/VIA REUTERS

The new $1 coin featuring President Donald Trump's likeness will be available this fall. This gold-colored commemorative coin has generated plenty of buzz, but is it actually worth buying as an investment?

Unlike traditional gold bullion coins, the Trump $1 coin contains no precious metals. That means any value beyond its $1 face value will depend largely on collector demand, scarcity and market interest – not the price of gold. While commemorative coins can appreciate over time, their returns tend to be less predictable than those of bullion coins, which derive much of their value from the precious metals they contain.

So, does the Trump coin have a place in your portfolio? Here's what to know about the new release and how it compares with traditional gold investment coins:

What we know about the new $1 Trump coin

The U.S. Treasury Department announced that production of the new Trump $1 coin began at the Philadelphia Mint in July, with a public release expected this fall. Although the coin has a gold-colored finish, it is made of non-precious metals and carries a legal-tender face value of $1.

Could the $1 Trump coin become valuable?

The short answer is: possibly, but there's no guarantee.

Unlike gold bullion coins, the Trump coin contains no precious metals. Any value above its $1 face value will depend on factors such as collector demand, the number of coins produced and how many people choose to keep rather than spend them.

"It could retain a small collector premium depending on the number of coins produced, demand, hoarding behavior by the public and how quickly the Mint fulfills orders," says Philip Diehl, former U.S. Mint director and president of the U.S. Money Reserve. He adds that coins with minting errors could also command higher prices among collectors.

Still, experts caution against buying commemorative coins with the expectation of strong investment returns.

"Commemorative coins can sometimes outperform bullion, but that is the exception, not something a buyer should assume," says Eric Turney, marketing director at Monterey Company, a custom coin manufacturer.

What are gold investment coins?

Gold investment coins, also known as bullion coins, are produced by government mints and struck from precious metals that meet strict purity standards. Unlike circulating currency, bullion coins are purchased primarily as investments, and their value is tied to the market price of the gold they contain.

Like the new Trump $1 coin, U.S. gold bullion coins are legal tender and carry an official face value. However, that face value has little practical significance because the gold they contain is worth far more. For example, the one-ounce American Gold Eagle has a face value of $50, but the current price of gold determines its market value.

"Today, a one-ounce Gold American Eagle sells for about 4,200 times the face value of a Trump $1 coin," Diehl says.

Should you buy the Trump coin or gold bullion coins?

The right choice depends on why you're buying.

If you're a collector or Trump supporter looking for a piece of political memorabilia, the commemorative $1 Trump coin may be worth considering. Just keep in mind that any value beyond its $1 face value is not guaranteed.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Trinity: Alabama Cooperage, an Alabama manufacturing facility that produces alcohol storage barrels, has made the decision to shutter its operations in Trinity, triggering over 70 layoffs.

ALASKA Anchorage: Three Western Alaska tribal governments and multiple environmental groups have filed two lawsuits to overturn a federal permit for a 19-mile road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Beacon reported.

ARIZONA Casa Grande: Firefighters with the Eloy Fire Department gave 81 cows an impromptu spa day after the truck that was hauling the herd broke down at a truck stop in Casa Grande, according to a Facebook post from the Eloy Fire District. To stop the cows from overheating, firefighters began spraying cool water into the trailer, according to the post.

ARKANSAS Ozark: Students in the air conditioning and refrigeration program at Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus posted a 94% pass rate on the recent EPA 608 industry certification exam, surpassing the national average of 85%.

CALIFORNIA Los Angeles: The US High Speed Rail coalition applauded the signing of a memorandum of understanding to advance development of the Southern California High Desert Corridor. The coalition said the signing of the document and project is a critical link in creating a Southwest Regional High-Speed Rail Network.

COLORADO Eagle County: Colorado has a new wolf pack to replace one lost earlier this year when its parents died, leaving the state with four packs. The new wolf pack, confirmed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, was named the Piney Ridge pack and resides in Eagle County, according to an agency news release.

CONNECTICUT Cheshire: City officials have banned e-bikes, e-scooters and other motorized rideable vehicles from Bartlem Park following complaints of reckless riding and vandalism at the park's newly constructed bandshell, WFSB reported.

DELAWARE Millsboro: A Millsboro woman faces a litany of animal cruelty charges after 26 live animals and seven dead were seized from her home the week of July 15.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: The National Guard has signed a nearly $300 million contract to house up to 2,000 troops in furnished DC apartments, a move officials say will reduce lodging costs but critics argue could prolong the Guard's presence in the city, WUSA9 reported.

FLORIDA Orlando: Brightline announced more discounts on its rail fares between South Florida and Orlando as it borrowed more money to pay for daily operations, it missed a debt payment and a financial agency downgraded its credit rating.

GEORGIA Warrenton: Asama Coldwater Manufacturing Georgia LLC will eliminate 107 jobs at its foundry in Warrenton, according to a recent filing under the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act. The plant's phased shutdown is scheduled to begin in September.

HAWAII Honolulu: The University of Hawaii and University Laboratory School reached an agreement that allows the school to remain on the university's Manoa campus through June 30, 2029, with an option to extend through 2034, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Nampa: Central Elementary School will not be ready for the start of the school year after flooding damaged classrooms, electrical systems and HVAC equipment, forcing the district to relocate students and staff temporarily, KTVB7 reported.

ILLINOIS Macomb: Illinois transportation and Extension officials are launching a prairie restoration project in Macomb that will convert an unmanaged state right-of-way into habitat for pollinators, wildlife and educational programming.

INDIANA Indianapolis: The city has designated the bridge connecting downtown with a new business district across the White River the Greenlawn Memorial Bridge, paying homage to the former city cemetery excavated to make way for construction. The new name honors Greenlawn Cemetery, the city's first public burial ground that held the remains of the city's earliest pioneers, including African American residents.

HIGHLIGHT: OREGON

The new Amtrak Cascades train rolls through Eugene during a tour of Oregon before official service begins later this year. CHRIS PIETSCH/USA TODAY NETWORK

Eugene: The new passenger train that will serve the Amtrak Cascades line from Eugene to Vancouver, British Columbia, arrived in Eugene for the first time on July 23. The new Airo trains will replace much of Amtrak's passenger fleet starting with the northwest's Amtrak Cascades line, which currently relies on trains primarily built in the 1970s. Amtrak is targeting a September launch. On July 22, the train did its first test run of the northern half of the route from Seattle to Vancouver, B.C., and back. On July 23, the train tested the southern half of the route from Seattle to Eugene and back. The test seemed to go smoothly.

IOWA Des Moines: Iowa farm income tumbled 53% from 2022 to 2024, squeezed by record-high input costs, depressed corn and soybean prices and continued trade uncertainty, a new report shows. The pain is likely to continue through 2027, even with federal government assistance helping farmers stay afloat, according to the report from Iowa State University, the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and the Iowa Bankers Association.

KANSAS Topeka: Kansas' six state universities will receive $2 million each that the Legislature set aside as incentive for the Kansas Board of Regents to adopt an anti-diversity, equity and inclusion policy.

KENTUCKY Louisville: The U.S. Department of Justice's lawsuit against Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams and the State Board of Elections seeking unredacted information on Kentucky voters was dismissed, according to a release from Jefferson County Clerk David Yates.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: While the exact count of mosquitoes in Louisiana is impossible to calculate, the state is estimated to have the fourth highest mosquito population in the United States, according to World Population Review. Louisiana is home to a total of 68 species of mosquito, making it the state with the fourth most species.

MAINE York: Members of the Historic District Commission hoped a new town-wide tax break for owners of York's historic homes would encourage their preservation. But the Selectboard voted to reject the proposal, sending the commission back to the drawing board as it looks for ways to protect older homes from demolition.

MARYLAND Baltimore: Perdue Farms and the Baltimore Ravens launched a multi-year partnership that will bring Perdue products to Ravens facilities and game-day operations while supporting hunger-relief efforts across Maryland.

MASSACHUSETTS Hopedale: Nearly 1,000 new jobs are soon coming to Hopedale as global shipping and logistics company Maersk prepares to open a fulfillment hub in town later this summer.

MICHIGAN Detroit: Detroit's long underused city-owned airport welcomed the opening of the headquarters for a helicopter touring company, marking the first new commercial development at the facility in 60 years. MyFlight Tours opened its new $4 million 12,000-square-foot building at the Coleman A. Young International Airport.

MINNESOTA St. Cloud: Spanier Bus Service has been recognized for its commitment to employing veterans. The company received the Employer of Veterans Award from the American Legion Department of Minnesota, according to an announcement.

MISSISSIPPI Hattiesburg: The Hattiesburg Zoo announced the name of its newest spotted hyena cub. The male cub's name is Tukio, which means adventure in Swahili. Tukio was born on June 7 to his mother Pili and father Niru.

MISSOURI Springfield: A new book collection focused on Missouri's role in the Civil War will begin reaching readers in August as Fry's Lyon Foundation Inc. launches the first volumes of its "1861 Missouri Speaks Collection."

MONTANA Helena: The ACLU of Montana reached a settlement with the federal government that protects two Montana State University international students from deportation by restoring their student status and allowing them to continue their studies in the United States, The Daily Montanan reported.

NEBRASKA Julian: A restored historic building in Julian has been transformed into a new museum aimed at preserving and showcasing the community's local history and heritage, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Reno: Reno ranks among the United States' top emerging metro areas, according to an annual ranking by LinkedIn. The professional networking platform ranked the Reno metro area No. 3 in its 2026 Cities on the Rise report.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Portsmouth: Richard Hartley, appointed last year as New Hampshire's director of ports and harbors, has been asked to take part in leadership training after an investigation into two complaints regarding his workplace behavior.

NEW JERSEY Montclair: Montclair State University has launched construction of a new $120 million interdisciplinary science building that is scheduled to open in time for the start of the 2028-2029 academic year.

NEW MEXICO Sunland Park: A third party hearing officer has scheduled an October hearing in Sunland Park regarding the air quality permit application related to Project Jupiter.

NEW YORK New York: A federal judge has ruled that New York City cannot prohibit Uber Technologies and Lyft from deactivating drivers from their apps without advance notice, ruling that the novel law is unconstitutional.

NORTH CAROLINA Fayetteville: The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality plans to install a soil vapor extraction system at the long-closed Cliffdale Landfill after an investigation found methane from decomposing waste was migrating to nearby properties.

NORTH DAKOTA Medora: Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library CEO Ed O'Keefe announced he will leave the organization in September, KFYR reported.

OHIO Columbus: Columbus' G&J Pepsi-Cola Bottlers recently wrapped a $45 million expansion that brought the facility to 375,000 square feet.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: An unseasonably warm February followed by a freeze in March has devastated Oklahoma's berry and stone fruit production, leaving local farmers with failed crops and consumers with fewer alternatives as prices and health concerns increase on supermarket fruit.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement informed the Shapiro Administration it will not create immigration detention centers at warehouses in Berks and Schuylkill counties.

RHODE ISLAND Cranston: Mayor Ken Hopkins has returned the 1975 sports car a former supporter accused him of stealing in 2021, ending a legal battle that threatened his reelection.

SOUTH CAROLINA Spartanburg: An urban farm located in Spartanburg's Northside community is coming back to life, thanks to a partnership between the city and a local nonprofit organization. Volunteers and staff members with Ruth's Gleanings, a healthy food ministry based in Spartanburg, are working to rehabilitate the small farm located beside the Hub City Farmers' Market. The property, which is owned by the city and has sat idle for more than a year, has been renamed Full Harvest Farm.

SOUTH DAKOTA Rapid City: The board that oversees South Dakota's public universities plans to ask state lawmakers for nearly $60.5 million for building projects and maintenance, the launch of a national defense center in Rapid City and technology upgrades related to artificial intelligence, South Dakota Searchlight reported. The Board of Regents also endorsed construction funding requests, including funding to begin the previously announced move of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine to Sioux Falls, according to the news outlet.

TENNESSEE Nashville: Protect Tennessee Forests posted on social media that there has been an increase in reports in Tennessee in the past few weeks of sightings of the hammerhead worm, an invasive species from Southeast Asia.

TEXAS Austin: A divided federal appeals court blocked Texas from enforcing a key provision of a state law meant to shield children from harm through using social media.

UTAH Salt Lake City: A new WalletHub study has ranked Utah among the states with the lowest percentage of at-risk youths, placing 47th in the nation, KUTV reported.

VERMONT South Burlington: The Royal Air Force's Red Arrows and Vermont-based BETA Technologies flew together above Lake Champlain on July 13, an aviation collaboration between the United Kingdom and Vermont in a pair of aerial demonstrations. The British aerobatic team is touring the U.S. as part of events tied to the nation's 250th anniversary and recently appeared in Boston and Maine. The Vermont visit brought together one of the world's best-known military flight demonstration teams and a company developing electric aircraft technology.

VIRGINIA Staunton: Columbia Gas of Virginia held a grand opening ceremony on its new operations center in Staunton on July 23.

WASHINGTON Seattle: Authorities in Seattle are investigating after two people climbed over the glass wall of the iconic Space Needle and parachuted from the top of the 605-foot landmark building.

WEST VIRGINIA Charleston: West Virginia residents can now sign up as organ donors when registering to vote or updating their voter registration under a new state law aimed at expanding participation in the national organ donor registry, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Milwaukee: As domestic violence-related homicides increase in Milwaukee, a local community organization is launching initiatives to reach men in crisis before family conflicts turn deadly. Asha Family Services has been providing services to victims of crime and abuse since 1988. Starting in August, it will expand its men's programs, including an intervention program called the Ujima Men's Program SOS and a physical space called the Umoja Dock, where men can voluntarily stay for up to 72 hours in hopes of preventing retaliatory violence.

WYOMING Cheyenne: Wyoming's Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Trust Fund Board awarded $1.9 million in grants to 15 counties across the state for trail construction, campground upgrades and other outdoor recreation infrastructure projects aimed at expanding access and boosting tourism, WyoFile reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

Reasons to take Seahawks' repeat bid seriously

Michael Middlehurst-Schwartz USA TODAY

The Seattle Seahawks shouldn't have to squeeze back into the spotlight. • That space typically would be reserved for the defending Super Bowl champion throughout the offseason. In Seattle's case, however, gazes began to stray not long after Mike Macdonald and company got their hands on the Lombardi Trophy. • The Seahawks were, without question, compelling victors. Their systematic dismantling of the New England Patriots in Super Bowl 60 was a fitting capstone to a campaign that eradicated all doubt as to who was the NFL's strongest outfit by season's end.

But it wasn't long before a group known for its lack of braggadocio – and perhaps star power – became somewhat of an afterthought.

As the organization's veterans reported for training camp July 24, the Seahawks began preparation for their title defense with a diminished level of buzz. Despite the 2025 season's accomplishments, Seattle doesn't stoke comparable offseason intrigue to the Los Angeles Rams, who might have secured their place as the focal point of the NFC West – and perhaps the league at large – with their acquisition of Myles Garrett. And as the Patriots also began work the same day in preparation for the season-opening Super Bowl rematch, New England clearly is on track to command more attention after the addition of A.J. Brown.

It turns out a championship, record sale price and spot on "Hard Knocks" only buys the public's focus for so long.

Yet that dynamic likely matters little to the

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Top: Jaxon Smith-Njigba holds up the Vince Lombardi Trophy during a Super Bowl 60 celebration. Middle: Linebacker DeMarcus Lawrence, coach Mike Macdonald and running back Jadarian Price. Bottom: Quarterback Sam Darnold interacts with fans after the first training camp session July 25.

PHOTOS BY STEVEN BISIG/IMAGN IMAGES AND JASON REDMOND/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Matt Hayes
College football columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Biggest lie of NIL era isn't what you think

Let me explain the great fallacy of the name, image and likeness (NIL) era, a five-year college sports circus so unhinged and unbridled, the NCAA and Congress can't figure it out.

Or don't want to.

Because the answer has always been as simple as collectively bargaining with players. A player union, strictly bargained rules, and consequences for those who break rules.

Now, the fallacy: Players don't want to be employees and collectively bargain.

Maybe the biggest load of crap I've heard in five years of NIL era lies and deceit.

College sports leaders, and even some within Congress, continue to push this ridiculous charade. Continue to say players keep telling them they don't want to be employees, don't want the on- and off-field protections that come with collectively bargaining.

They just want to be individual contractors, negotiate directly with schools and be swindled by "agents" and "middlemen" and whatever the crooks who take 30% of their earnings are calling themselves these days.

I mean, what player in his right mind wouldn't want to collectively bargain and have access to 48.8% of media rights revenue? Some quick math: The four Power conferences reported earnings of nearly $4 billion. And those numbers will grow exponentially over the next decade.

If college sports leaders were genuine and honest about it all, they'd admit it's really just the top 1% of players who don't want to collectively bargain. Why would they?

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Bob Nightengale
Columnist
USA TODAY

2026 Fame class brings back game's old values

COOPERSTOWN, NY – It was an old-school reminder to the way baseball used to be played, the way we looked at the game, and the stats that shaped our opinions at the Baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

The new Hall of Fame trio of Jeff Kent, Carlos Beltran and Andruw Jones were here to remind everyone the traditional statistics should still matter. Runs batted in should not be considered a fluke stat in a box score. There really is a clutch element in a player's psyche. And while everyone is engrossed with on-base percentage these days, even if some sluggers are only clogging the bases by drawing a rash of walks, future Hall of Fame manager Dusty Baker has a question for you: "If driving in runs or scoring runs isn't important," he said, "then why are we bothering to keep score?"

Kent, Beltran and Jones, inducted July 26 with a record 60 Hall of Famers and 12,000 fans in attendance, certainly represented baseball's greatest values throughout their careers.

They didn't celebrate drawing a walk with a runner on third base with less than two outs, instead wanting to drive them in, not letting the responsibility fall to someone else.

They didn't sit out games when they

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Seahawks

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Seahawks, who can fall back on Macdonald's now-famous post-NFC championship refrain: "We did not care."

With no rallying cries for a repeat bid or other inflammatory boasting accompanying the start of a new season, Seattle seems as though it's somehow flying under the radar. While the field will always have a more favorable outlook than any one team – even a potential front-runner – here are five reasons the Seahawks' repeat chances shouldn't be overlooked:

One of the Seahawks' biggest changes is new offensive coordinator Brian Fleury, talking with running back Emanuel Wilson on July 25. STEVEN BISIG/IMAGN IMAGES

1. Continuity is key

At this time last year, McDonald was implementing one of the league's more drastic overhauls for an incumbent coach, reconfiguring his offense to better adhere to his overall vision for the team. By comparison, the season-to-season change for Seattle is relatively minimal.

That might seem like an oversimplification for an organization that lost its ace play-caller (Klint Kubiak), Super Bowl 60 MVP (Kenneth Walker III) and other meaningful pieces. Yet with the overwhelming majority of their core coming back, the Seahawks could enjoy a level of continuity not seen by other recent title winners.

Other than Walker, every offensive starter from Super Bowl 60 is back. And while new coordinator Brian Fleury is instituting his own system, the former San Francisco 49ers run game coordinator knows he has a basis to work with in what Kubiak already built.

"I do think one of the advantages of taking this job is there is gonna be a lot of continuity," Fleury said in February after his hiring. "I've already started to dive into everything that (Kubiak) was doing here last year, and the goal would be to maintain as much of that as possible, but there's also areas where we can supplement that with things that we've developed and done in San Francisco."

That should be a boon to Sam Darnold, who has grown accustomed to change after playing for five different teams in his previous six years. Fleury will be Darnold's seventh different offensive coordinator in as many seasons, but the quarterback said in June that the switch hasn't been "too much of a transition." The texture of the attack might shift, but the essence – including the emphasis on unlocking explosive plays while staying true to the overall framework of a Kyle Shanahan offense – should remain largely the same.

2. The run game is a concern, but there's a clear lane ahead

Though it was an expected loss, Walker's departure in free agency is a difficult blow to a run game that finally found its footing down the stretch.

In the final three games before the playoffs, Seattle racked up 514 yards on the ground. Then, with Zach Charbonnet succumbing to a torn anterior cruciate ligament in the divisional-round win over the 49ers, Walker stepped up by rushing for 313 yards and four scores in three postseason games.

With Walker off to the Kansas City Chiefs and Charbonnet opening up camp on the physically unable to perform list, the backfield is unquestionably the greatest source of uncertainty for Seattle.

It's worth noting, however, that the run game remained a problem for the majority of the season before the late-season swell. Through the first 15 weeks of the season, Seattle ranked 22nd in the NFL with 113 rushing yards per game and 27th with 3.9 yards per carry. But the Seahawks still managed to go 12-3 to that point, their attack fueled primarily by Darnold and Offensive Player of the Year Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

In selecting Notre Dame's Jadarian Price with the No. 32 overall pick, general manager John Schneider made a clear statement about where he wants the ground game to go from here. Price can hardly be considered an every-down grinder after never logging more than 15 carries in a game while operating alongside No. 3 overall pick Jeremiyah Love for the Fighting Irish. But he had a knack for breaking away from opponents, both as a runner and returner, and should be able to keep the chunk gains coming after Walker tied for third in the NFL with 10 carries of 20-plus yards last season.

For more consistency, Seattle might need George Holani and other backups to help spell Price until Charbonnet returns. But last year's results should serve as evidence that there's no reason to panic if it takes the assortment of backs a bit of time to find their stride.

There's reason for optimism beyond the **ballcarriers** themselves, too. Fleury's background should allow him to keep the bones of what worked last year while allowing the team to expand into more promising looks, particularly in two-tight-end sets. The offensive line, which quietly went from a concern to an area of strength, also returns all five starters.

3. Rashid Shaheed hasn't been fully unlocked

A midseason trade for a speedy receiver made plenty of sense for a team intent on taxing its opponents.

The Seahawks acquired Shaheed with the intent of unlocking him as the big-play dynamo he previously was under Kubiak, for whom the pass catcher averaged 17.5 yards per catch in 2024 on the New Orleans Saints. In a half-season in Seattle, however, Shaheed posted just 15 catches in nine regular-season games as he struggled to reaffirm his place as one of the league's premier deep threats.

Yet there was no buyer's remorse from Schneider, who re-signed Shaheed to a three-year, $51 million contract at the outset of free agency. That money made clear that the Seahawks see the Pro Bowl kick returner as a critical staple of their offense.

Though Smith-Njigba is sure to remain the focal point of the aerial attack, Shaheed's contributions should prove vital. Not only does his mere presence open up the field for Darnold, but the occasional vertical shot also can reduce the reliance on having an efficient and methodical run game. Also aiding in that effort: second-year receiver Tory Horton, who scored five touchdowns as a rookie and showed sizable potential as a deep threat before a shin injury disrupted his rookie campaign.

4. The 'Dark Side' defense should have a strong sequel lined up

Defenses typically are ripe for regression. And after Seattle finished last season as the league's stingiest unit in points allowed – and the No. 8 since 1978 in DVOA (defense-adjusted value over average) – it's difficult to say with any sense of certainty that the group can clear the sky-high bar it set in 2025.

But things are still looking mighty bright for the "Dark Side."

That all starts with Macdonald. Shutting down the Patriots in the Super Bowl might have been the coach's defensive masterpiece, but it also represented a feat Seattle had achieved all season: shutting down opposing run games while living in light boxes and stymieing quarterbacks and linemen with exotic pressure packages.

With the league's most formidable defensive tackle tandem in Leonard Williams and Byron Murphy II returning, the Seahawks should continue to set the tone up front. Though the edge rush might not be quite as formidable after Boye Mafe's exit, a group that still runs four deep retained its most important pieces in DeMarcus Lawrence, Uchenna Nwosu and Derick Hall.

The secondary could be a relative concern given the change prompted by safety Coby Bryant and cornerback Riq Woolen signing elsewhere. But Devon Witherspoon and Josh Jobe provide a strong outlook on the outside, while Nick Emmanwori looks like a burgeoning star as a dynamic nickel.

5. The NFL can be a weak-link system – and Seattle might have the fewest vulnerabilities

Even the foremost contenders can be undone by one glaring problem area. Think back to Patrick Mahomes picking on then-Buffalo Bills cornerback Kaiir Elam in the 2024 AFC championship game – or the Seahawks overwhelming the left side of the Patriots' offensive line in Super Bowl 60.

For all of its top-tier talent, Seattle's strong suit might be its lack of an obvious area to attack.

The most obvious candidate for opponents to zero in on might be Anthony Bradford. The right guard's struggles became more pronounced in the three close matchups with the Rams, when he surrendered a 13% pressure rate and 16 of his 41 pressures on the season. Preventing him from derailing those critical NFC West tilts might get even more difficult this fall, especially if Aaron Donald hops out of retirement to join his former team. But that shortcoming didn't prove too troublesome on the season, as Seattle surrendered just 27 sacks while still featuring an aggressive aerial attack.

The safety spot vacated by Thomas looks like the only other notable spot with lingering questions. Second-round safety Bud Clark, a savvy playmaker who recorded 15 interceptions at TCU, should take over the role down the line. But Ty Okada, who stepped in with 11 starts last season, can hold down the role next to Julian Love if Clark requires time to acclimate.

Hayes

Continued from Page 1C

They have free movement, and many make more than end of roster players in the NFL. The setup is perfect for them.

But not for the vast majority of the 14,500 football players in the Football Bowl Subdivision. Not for thousands of players pushed into the portal by aforementioned "agents" – only to find it's not what they were sold.

I'm sure college sports leaders have spoken to them, and they love the current setup that leaves them vulnerable within a broken system, and to coaches trying to find the next better – while trying to save their own hides and protect their own millions.

If you're looking for answers to all the problems the brilliant minds of Congress are currently debating (that's sarcasm, everyone), it's right in front of you with collective bargaining.

Stanford football players formed the first player-led chapter of the College Football Players Association (CFBPA), the organization announced July 27. It's a first step toward potentially unionizing college athletes and developing a collective bargaining agreement.

Age limitations. Player movement. Elimination of judicial overreach (see: judge shopping). No rules. No enforcement. All of it goes away with collective bargaining. But so, too, does the hoarding of cash.

Now you're starting to see what this is all about, what it's always about: money.

College sports leaders don't want to fork over 48.8% (the current number NFL players receive from NFL franchises in CBA negotiations) of annual revenue.

It has nothing to do with players and their desire to avoid employment.

Free player movement, blown salary caps and circumventing the salary cap with private NIL ends when collective bargaining begins. The free-for-all of roster turnover and player management ceases to be a problem.

All of the issues that currently plague college sports, that Congress has spent a year trying to fix and won't – the Protect College Sports Act has zero chance of getting through Congress – will go away when universities and players collectively bargain.

The same way they collectively bargained, in a sense, to reach the original groundbreaking revenue share deal from the House case. That deal took a lawsuit and a judge, and universities fighting for every single inch of ground, but it happened.

It wasn't the end of college sports as we know it, and it hasn't pushed anyone or anything to the edge of a financial cliff – despite the nattering nabobs of negativism constantly declaring the end is near, yet somehow managing to field teams every single year.

Because there's always more money in the game. How the regular season and postseason are formatted can be debated and collectively bargained – a helluva lot easier than SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey and Big Ten Commissioner Tony Petitti playing footsie for two years.

Live sports is everything for network television, and streaming sites. They can't get enough of it because it's the only thing that sells.

And nothing sells quite like football. The NFL *and* college football.

The only thing that's real and undeniable in this current mosh pit of a five-year NIL era run.

There's one way out of this mess: Share the $4 billion-plus-plus annually, and end this charade.

Nightengale

Continued from Page 1C

weren't feeling well, or treat the injured list like a paid vacation. They posted, season after season, oftentimes playing in pain, knowing they were a whole lot more valuable at 70% than sitting on the bench.

They didn't try to create a brand. They didn't try to draw attention to themselves. They played to win, game after game, season after season.

Go ahead, check out their résumés:

- Kent, who hit the most home runs by a second baseman in history, hit at least 20 homers and drove in 100 or more runs in six consecutive seasons and eight times in his career.
- Jones played more than 150 games in 11 seasons with Atlanta, including four more than 160 games.
- Beltran, a nine-time All-Star, had eight seasons of at least 100 RBIs and seven scoring 100 or more runs.

And there wasn't a single whisper, rumor or innuendo that any of the trio used performance-enhancing drugs, with Kent talking about how he wanted to emulate Chicago Cubs great Ryne Sandberg, whose legendary Hall speech emphasized the importance of playing the game the right way.

"I never had the chance to meet Ryne," Kent said, "but I watched him play every day because I wanted to be like him. He played with toughness, and he played with quiet fire. I hope he knows that a lot of us who came after him play that way as well."

Jones, the first player from Curaçao to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, said it was his father who stressed the importance of showing up to work every day. It was no different than if you were a postal worker, a fisherman, or you made a living on the ball field.

"Everything started with my dad," Jones said. "My dad told me from the beginning, if a shrimp goes to sleep, the water, the storm, will take him away. So, when I put the uniform on, I showed up ready to play because I could go oh-for-4 and have an impact. That's why I took so much pride in my defense. Every time I walked on that field, I was trying to do something special to help my team. You focus on the team, not yourself."

Kent, who hit .334 with 41 homers, 125 RBIs with a 1.021 OPS during his 2000 MVP season with the San Francisco Giants, was proud to be a run producer. "Tommy Lasorda, one of the best motivators in the game, said a simple truth that I lived by for my whole career," Kent said. "Money lies in the RBIs ... It stuck in my brain forever, and it never left. If I was going to win, I knew I needed to produce runs. That became my focus, and as a middle infielder in my era, I'm proud that I set the bar for run production. That focus on run production defined a big part of my career."

It was Kansas City Royals Hall of Famer George Brett who helped shape Beltran's career. He was just being elected into Cooperstown when Beltran broke in as a 21-year-old, and retired at 40, becoming the only switch-hitter to hit 300 homers and steal 300 bases. Brett taught Beltran the importance of playing every day, and as hard as he could, and he not only played all 162 games in 2002, but he missed just one game in 2008 when he was 31 years old.

Beltran went to Houston and became teammates with future Hall of Famers Jeff Bagwell and Craig Biggio, who reinforced the advice Brett gave him. "There's no way I could have lasted 20 years in the big leagues without learning how to play with pain," Beltran said.

Let's see if it rubs off on the next generation.

PGA TOUR 3M OPEN

‘Action Jackson’ wins in 3rd start

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

Jackson Koivun is interviewed on the 18th green July 26 after making par to win the 3M Open at TPC Twin Cities. ANDREW WEVERS/GETTY IMAGES

Jackson Koivun always has been precocious.

In second grade, Koivun already had mastered addition and subtraction, so his teacher jumped ahead to teaching him division and multiplication, recalled his mother, Meghan. “Because she didn’t know what else to do,” she said. “It was the same with spelling and everything else.”

Fred Garcia, his golf coach, remembers their first lesson when Koivun was 12. “He hit a medium bucket of balls in about five minutes, just rifling through them,” Garcia said. “When he got done, I said ‘You’ve got to learn how to practice. You’ve got to have a routine.’ ”

Koivun’s routine became winning. Champ is the nickname that Garcia, teaching pro at Cinnabar Hills in San Jose, bestowed on his prized pupil, and on July 26, the 21-year-old prodigy became a champion for the first time on the PGA Tour, winning the 3M Open in Blaine, Minnesota, in just his third PGA Tour start as a professional and 13th career start overall.

Koivun closed in 5-under 66 at TPC Twin Cities to set a 72-hole tournament scoring record of 25-under 259 and three strokes better than world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler.

Koivun made his move on Saturday, playing the final 10 holes in 9 under to shoot a tournament-record back-nine score of 28, card 61 and tie the 3M Open 54-hole scoring record. He built a three-stroke lead and six ahead of Scheffler, but he knew there were birdies to be had and that someone likely would go low in the final round – Michael Kim shot 59 on Friday but ran out of gas on the weekend.

In the final round, Koivun birdied the first hole and three of the first six to stretch his lead to as many as six. But Scheffler refused to make it a cakewalk, throwing a final-round 63 to finish 22 under and record his fifth runner-up of the season. The world No. 1 has gone 182 days since his last win. Past major champions Hideki Matsuyama (64) and Brian Harman (65) tied for third at 20 under along with Chandler Phillips and Denny McCarthy. “I did what I could today,” Scheffler said. “My back nine Friday and front nine Saturday cost me. But I put up a good fight.”

Koivun kept hearing the crowd saying, “Scottie’s coming! Scottie’s coming!” He tried to tune out all the noise and holed a critical 15-foot par putt at the ninth.

“If I missed that, then I only had a two-shot lead where last time I checked I had a five-shot lead,” he said. “So, making that was huge for my momentum, just helped me keep it rolling on the back nine.”

He played the final 42 holes of the tournament bogey-free, tacking on a birdie at the par-5 12th, and drove the short, par-4 16th, to set up a 6-foot birdie. He pumped his right fist when he holed a 14-foot par putt at the last and then hugged his dad.

“It never really feels like you’re going to win until you make the putt and that’s kind of when all the emotions come crashing down on you,” Koivun said. “I think I did a really good job this week of staying levelheaded, but I felt like that was an appropriate time to show some emotions.”

Koivun is proving to live up to the hype. Last month, Koivun led Auburn to its second national championship title in three years. He won six times in 13 collegiate starts in his final season, becoming the first player in collegiate golf history to win all three Player of the Year awards (Haskins, Hogan, Nicklaus) twice – first as a freshman in 2024 and again as a junior in 2026.

Veteran pro Russell Henley, who won the Charles Schwab Challenge in May, has become good friends with Koivun and played with him a bunch during his college days. “I don’t think he has a lot to learn. That kid’s good,” Henley told PGA Tour.com in a video titled “The Acceleration of Jackson Koivun.” “I always tell him just let me know when you’re going to turn pro so I can retire.”

Koivun was the No. 1-ranked player in the World Amateur Golf Rankings when he accepted PGA Tour membership via PGA Tour University Accelerated. He missed the cut at the John Deere Classic last month in his professional debut but finished tied for 10th at the ISCO Championship in his most recent start.

Scheffler, for one, was impressed with how he handled himself sleeping on a lead and never let anyone cut into it. “I think that shows not only how talented of a player he is, but I think the mental strength he has as well,” he said.

As a measure of his mental fortitude, CBS Sports’ Amanda Balionis asked Koivun to show the TV audience his glove, where he’d written the words confidence, trust and dominate.

“Dominate’s a word I came up with in college because I just want to go see how good I can play,” he said.

And now, just 35 days after playing his final round as an amateur, Koivun’s dream of winning on the PGA Tour is complete in a flash. That’s always been his M.O. “The bigger the spotlight, the more he shines,” Garcia said.

Champ is officially a champ.

LIV GOLF UNITED KINGDOM

Lucas Herbert wins with record-setting showing

Field Level Media
REUTERS

Lucas Herbert wasn’t about to be denied the LIV Golf United Kingdom championship on July 26.

Entering the final round at 20-under with a three-stroke lead over Bryson DeChambeau, the Australian holed 10 birdies for a 62 and a 30-under-par 258 for the four-day event. That gave him a six-stroke victory over England’s Tyrrell Hatton, who turned in a 63.

DeChambeau closed with a 68 to finish 21-under par and in third place at JCB Golf & Country Club in Rocester, England.

Herbert’s dominance this week – his 62 was preceded by rounds of 61, 66 and 69 – led Rippers GC to a 52-under finish, four strokes ahead of captain Jon Rahm’s Legion XIII.

The 30-under finish by Herbert marked the lowest in LIV history. This was his second individual victory of the season – he also won LIV Golf Virginia in May – and he set the league record for birdies in a tournament with 30. His combination of 32 birdies and eagles in a tournament also broke a LIV record.

Herbert said confidence in his game grew after his strong finish at The Open Championship last week at Royal Birkdale, where he finished four shots behind winner Ryan Fox and tied for sixth.

“Just wanted to really carry that into this week the best I could,” Herbert said. “I think I got out of my own way the first two rounds and I started thinking about it yesterday. It was just good to play like that today when I was being pushed by two of the best players in the world.”

Hatton pushed as hard as he could with nine birdies, but it wasn’t enough given Herbert’s unprecedented four rounds.

“Obviously Lucas played amazing today, Hatton said. “I wanted to get off to a fast start, which is what I did, but unfortunately Lucas did as well. Yeah, I’m very proud of how I played. It would have been amazing to win in front of home fans, but I tried my best. But actually Lucas was incredible this week.”

Australian Cameron Smith shot a 69 on Sunday to finish in fourth at 17-under.

Jerry Kelly plays his tee shot from the third hole during the final round of the 2026 ISPS Handa Senior Open at Gleneagles. PAUL DEVLIN/GETTY IMAGES

Jerry Kelly wins ISPS Handa Senior Open

Todd Kelly
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

Jerry Kelly is a PGA Tour Champions major winner again. Kelly got up and down for birdie from a greenside bunker on the par-5 18th hole to clinch a final-round 2-under 68 to win the 2026 ISPS Handa Senior Open at historic Gleneagles in Scotland.

Kelly now has 14 PGA Tour Champions wins and he can put the Senior Open trophy on the mantle next to his two Senior Players titles (the second of which was won under the name Kaulig Companies Championship).

“It’s indescribable to win it. The senior Claret Jug is the trophy that I’ve wanted as an over-50 golfer other than any other,” the 59-year-old said on July 26. “To do it in Scotland at the Home of Golf and to actually win and get into the Home of Golf at St Andrews, I mean, I’m absolutely speechless. But it’s been this Scotland army out here that’s been behind me that really brought me through, and I really appreciate the people for getting behind me and just lifting me up when things were going low, saying you’ve got this and really pulling me through. I really appreciate Scotland itself.”

Cameron Percy had a 6-footer for birdie that could have put some pressure on Kelly, but he missed left. Kelly then made his 4-foot birdie to finish as the only golfer at double digits under par.

Percy tied Matt Gogel, who shot a final-round 63, and South Africa’s Darren Fichardt, for second at 8 under. Scotland’s Stephen Gallacher was solo fifth at 6 under. He shot a final-round 62 but came up short in his bid to win on home soil.

But this was Kelly’s year and he’s now the 10th American to win the Senior Open.

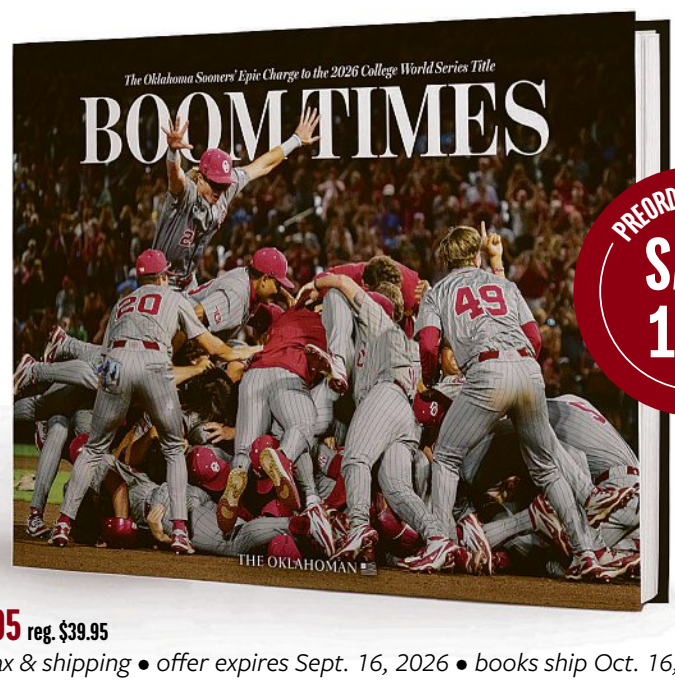
“My brain, actually, was the most successful part of my game,” said Kelly. “In the past I would have gotten down that I wasn’t striking it the way I’d like to strike it. But instead of worrying about that, I just went and took care of the next shot. I learned a lot about myself today, and I wish I would have learned it about 20, 30 years ago. You’re never too old to learn, and that’s what really pulled me through.”

Kelly is the oldest Open winner since Bernhard Langer, at age 61, won it in 2019.

This was the 16th of 28 PGA Tour Champions events, and the last of the five senior majors, this season. There are now nine events before the three-tournament postseason, the Charles Schwab Cup.

CHAMPS!

The Sooners’ CWS championship season in a hardcover collector’s book



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They weren’t supposed to win it all. They barely made the NCAA Tournament after a 14-16 record in the brutal SEC. But the Sooners caught fire and didn’t stop burning until they captured the College World Series for the third time. In one of college baseball’s greatest Cinderella stories, the Sooners finished on an 11-2 tear, outscoring their foes 118-53. From the walk-off home run that eliminated Georgia Tech to the 13-2 trashing of Kansas to the five homers that ousted Georgia to the 13-2 wipeout of North Carolina, Skip Johnson’s squad left no doubt which team deserved the CWS mountaintop.

“BOOM TIMES: The Oklahoma Sooners’ Epic Charge to the 2026 College World Series Title” is an exclusive hardcover collector’s book capturing every clutch moment of the greatest season in Sooners history, told by the award-winning journalists at The Oklahoman. Preorder now and own the thrilling story!

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THE OKLAHOMAN

Orioles know AL score: Win or go home

Gabe Lacques
Columnist
USA TODAY

BALTIMORE – What does it look like when nine seasons of toil comes down to six games?

For the Baltimore Orioles, it looks like this: Three 100-loss seasons amid front office regime change, an influx of insanely talented young players, a 101-win season, a sale of the franchise, a desultory regression, a managerial firing and finally, this fence-sitter of a season, stuck in a quagmire of American League mediocrity at 51-55.

The crucible: A three-game series at Detroit that looks like a trade deadline play-in match – winner to buy, loser to sell – followed by a three-game set at Camden Yards against the eternally contending Philadelphia Phillies.

And then, the Aug. 3 trade deadline, where their performance in the next six games very likely will determine their stance: Buy aggressively, sell off parts or play the middle.

Oh, the franchise won't collapse if these Orioles miss the playoffs for a second consecutive year. They are poised to be at least serviceable in coming years, even as their prized young players march toward free agency.

It's just that 118 losses in 2018, and 110 in 2021, followed by club president Mike Elias's promised "liftoff" after 2022 was supposed to mean much more.

Those 101 wins in 2023 bought a playoff bye and two home games at Camden Yards. And then five consecutive losses over two postseasons.

It's enough to add a jolt of urgency for franchise cornerstones.

"We haven't won a playoff game since I've been here," Gunnar Henderson, the 2023 Rookie of the Year and two-time top-10 MVP finisher, tells USA TODAY Sports. "That's something a lot of guys in this room, including myself, want to do, want to get past, and make a run. I feel like we got the group to do it. It's just a matter of doing it."

For these Orioles, the doing has been challenging. After last year's 15-28 start cost manager Brandon Hyde his job on the way to an 87-loss season, this year was supposed to be different. Elias augmented the club well in the offseason, most notably his first nine-figure commitment in first baseman Pete Alonso.

But an improved squad has performed arrhythmically. Injuries have not helped, but sloppy play and failures at various points in all departments have dragged them into the mire.

Heading into play July 27, they were 2 ½ games out of a playoff berth and one of 22 teams – 11 in each league – across the majors within 3 ½ games of the postseason. Limbo, basically. And one week to ensure they emerge with hope.

Playing spoiler against Skubal

Wednesday, July 29 at Comerica Park will mark a most dramatic time: It is possibly the final home start for Detroit Tigers ace and two-time reigning Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal. And the pitching matchup epitomizes the volatility of this trade deadline.

Opposing Skubal will be another lefthander, Baltimore's Trevor Rogers, in a similar but scaled-down situation.

Like Skubal, Rogers is a pending free agent and was his club's opening-day starter this season. Like Skubal, his team could view him as a crucial piece of a playoff push – or an asset to be sold for future parts.

And while Rogers' up-and-down journey to the verge of free agency lacks Skubal's dominance and accolades, his performance the last two months – a 1.80 ERA, a 45-to-14 strikeout-to-walk ratio and the Orioles' 6-3 record in his nine starts – would make him more than a consolation prize for a team that can't land Skubal.

With the Orioles a game up on Detroit (50-56) entering the series, Rogers-Skubal is one of just dozens of mini-battles that will play out within the vaster landscape of the deadline: Buyers and sellers and losers who get caught on the wrong side of that line.

"We know where we're at, standing-wise," says Rogers. "These games really matter this close to the deadline. If we play really good ball and make that gap a little bit closer, change the front office's mind, maybe we add a couple pieces."

Rogers hit the accelerator at a perfect time for himself and the Orioles. He had a 6.96 ERA through nine starts, at which point the Orioles were 23-30 and their pitching staff 28th with a 4.87 ERA.

Yet Rogers figured it out, improving his command to both sides of the plate in this two-month run, and so, too has the Orioles staff. They rank third in the majors with a 3.42 ERA since that point, giving them a chance.

"The standard we're trying to create here, especially what they did in '23 and '24 – we have the talent to do it," says Rogers. "There's just been times we haven't been consistent doing it every single day. Hopefully, we can continue that. The trust in here is really high. We all know what we're capable of and where we can go with this team."

Time to clean it up

Rogers is in some ways symbolic of this close-but-not-quite era in Baltimore. He was a trade-deadline acquisition in July 2024, Elias' first major burning of club assets by shipping future All-Star outfielder Kyle Stowers and infielder Connor Norby to Miami.

Gunnar Henderson's .693 OPS is below league average this season. KATIE STRATMAN/IMAGN IMAGES

And then Rogers was hit hard in four starts, posting a 7.11 ERA, and optioned to Class AAA in mid-August. The Orioles would get swept at home by Kansas City in a two-game wild-card series, giving them five losses in as many playoff games over two seasons in which they won 192 regular-season games.

Over those deadlines, Elias did not shine on the buy side, bringing in starting pitcher Jack Flaherty and reliever Shintaro Fujinami in 2023. Rogers, starter Zach Eflin, relievers Seranthony Dominguez and Gregory Soto and outfielder Eloy Jimenez were 2024 adds.

None save for Eflin factored heavily into postseason plans. All of which contributed to the strong feeling Elias could build a team, yet perhaps not act aggressively enough on the buy side.

Third-year owner David Rubenstein remains publicly effusive of Elias.

"Mike was the baseball executive of the year a few years ago. Widely regarded as outstanding by his peers. I'm very very happy, couldn't be more pleased," Rubenstein said Friday at a news conference announcing a $90 million contract extension for starter Kyle Bradish. "We've had some injuries, but that's not Mike's fault."

Elias, aware of the perception he's perhaps too protective of young organizational talent, has sounded bullish on the trade deadline even when the Orioles were well below .500. Hours before the Orioles dropped the first of two games against Atlanta, he cast an eye toward what they have – and can be.

"We have so much talent on this team. I think we all look at our record and it should be better," says Elias. "Where we're at right now, we're within arms' reach of a playoff spot, have enough time to get there. … But I look at the talent on this team and we're extremely optimistic we're going to get where we want to go."

For now, they'll have to do so without catchers Adley Rutschman and Samuel Basallo, both on the injured list with wrist and shoulder injuries, respectively. Their absences were felt in losing two of three games this weekend to Atlanta, including a particularly aggravating 3-2, 11-inning loss Sunday. It was more of the same: Inopportune hitting and two runs given away when simple defensive plays – a booted ball in the outfield, a shallow fly falling – were not made.

"We're way better than what our record shows," says Alonso, who has upheld his end of the bargain with 22 home runs and a .812 OPS. "But we've given a lot away collectively, through mistakes. That's why our record is what it is. But we have the ability to go on a run. To do damage and win a lot of games."

If Rutschman were healthy and the Orioles deeper below .500, he'd likely hear his name bandied about even more in trade rumors. As it is, Rutschman's eventual departure would leave Henderson as the significant symbol of Elias' transformative 2019 draft. Yet as Henderson eases into his mid-20s – he celebrated his 25th birthday last month – the game has come harder.

In his four full seasons, Henderson's OPS has gone from .814 his rookie season to .893, .787 and now .701. His adjusted OPS was a whopping 155 in 2024; now, he's a slightly below league average hitter. At times – particularly in the lost 2025 season – Henderson has worn his frustrations outwardly, as if the burden became too much. He notes that dealing with failure is something every player must navigate himself.

"It's something that's been a long learning curve for me," Henderson says of managing disappointment. "Still trying to break through that. I obviously have high expectations of myself. When you don't really, to my standard, achieve that, it's hard to not be hard on yourself. That's something that's definitely been tough, for me. And definitely something to work on."

Henderson himself will have two seasons remaining before free agency after this year. It's not so much do-or-die time for him as much as it is an inflection point in his tenure and, more broadly, this Orioles era.

The franchise must work to ensure the missed opportunities in 2023 and '24 weren't the high-water mark after years of ugly, ugly baseball. This year may offer another bite at the apple.

"The ground that we need to make up – we honestly need to win every game we can," says Henderson. "We want to make the playoffs. We're close, but not in there. We gotta keep winning games. Because it can come down to one game."

MLB POWER RANKINGS

Epic losing streak puts Alcantara in play

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

Has there ever been a more calamitous trade-deadline collapse than the Miami Marlins' pratfall the last two weeks?

The Marlins went from National League East contenders to almost certain deadline sellers over the course of a franchise-record 12-game losing streak, taking them from 52-42 and three games out of the division lead to 52-54 and the No. 8 position in the NL wild-card chase. Suddenly, the hottest team in baseball – the Marlins were 26-8 from June 1 until July 9, their last win before this cold spell – could be poised to sell one of the most cherished assets on the market.

Sandy Alcantara won the NL Cy Young in 2022. JIM RASSOL/IMAGN IMAGES

Yes, 2022 NL Cy Young Award winner Sandy Alcantara, long a subject of trade conjecture until the Marlins' hot streak, is very much back in play. That's what made the Marlins' 12th loss in this skid even stranger: The San Diego Padres rallied for four runs in the eighth inning, setting up Mason Miller for his 27th save. Miller, too, has been targeted as potential trade fodder with the Padres slipping from contention.

But a weekend with the Marlins vaulted them ahead of Miami, not just in the NL standings but USA TODAY Sports' MLB power rankings. Miami has tumbled nine spots to No. 18, and who knows how far it may fall once the deadline is done.

A look at our MLB power rankings:

1. Los Angeles Dodgers (–): Once again winning with such numbing regularity they can take their sweet time with Shohei Ohtani, Pitcher.

2. Milwaukee Brewers (–): Nothing wrong with being a five-inning pitcher when you strike out 12 of 16 batters faced, like Jacob Misiorowski.

3. Atlanta Braves (–): Ozzie Albies on pace for 26 homers, most since 2023.

4. Tampa Bay Rays (–): Bryan "The Outmaker" Baker has converted 17 consecutive save chances, allowing just one run.

5. New York Yankees (+1): Not sure trade deadline can change their apparent fate as second-place finisher/No. 1 American League wild card.

6. Chicago Cubs (-1): After seven-run, three-homer debacle, Jameson Taillon's ERA is 5.92 and rotation spot in question.

7. Philadelphia Phillies (–): Very quietly, their run differential is minus-18.

8. Chicago White Sox (–): What a bobblehead day for Munetaka Murakami as parents throw out first pitch, he hits two homers and drives in six.

9. Arizona Diamondbacks (+4): With four starting pitchers on injured list, trade deadline a vexing time for holders of NL's No. 3 wild card.

10. Boston Red Sox (+5): A win-now move from Craig Breslow? Lots of subtext to Curtis Mead acquisition.

11. Pittsburgh Pirates (-1): No need to wait for deadline to upgrade bullpen.

12. Texas Rangers (+2): Still hanging on to first place as Corey Seager heads out on rehab assignment.

13. Washington Nationals (+4): Hours after trading Curtis Mead, All-Stars CJ Abrams, James Wood combine for four home runs.

14. St. Louis Cardinals (-3): Losing home series to Reds continues drift away from contention.

15. Cleveland Guardians (-3): Five straight losses puts them closer to third than first.

16. San Diego Padres (+2): A sweep in Miami means a very happy flight all the way to San Diego.

17. Seattle Mariners (-1): Looked like a team hungry for reinforcements during sluggish series at Texas.

18. Miami Marlins (-9): Averaging just 2.5 runs per game in 12-game losing streak.

19. Baltimore Orioles (–): With catchers Adley Rutschman, Samuel Basallo ailing, replacements Chadwick Tromp, Sam Huff a combined 7-for-50.

20. Minnesota Twins (–): No. 3 overall pick Vahn Lackey will start journey to Target Field at high Class A Cedar Rapids.

21. Detroit Tigers (–): Just soul-crushing to lose series to Royals at this point.

22. Houston Astros (–): Carlos Beltrán and Jeff Kent's inductions give 2004 squad four Hall of Famers.

23. Cincinnati Reds (+1): Left for dead, then win three straight series. Interesting …

24. Toronto Blue Jays (-1): Max Scherzer returns to make first start since June 10.

25. San Francisco Giants (–): Like clockwork, Rafael Devers' OPS now .803.

26. New York Mets (–): Juan Soto, back on IL, won't play in much more than 100 games.

27. Kansas City Royals (+3): Nostalgia week: Salvador Perez passes George Brett for franchise HR record, Carlos Beltrán enters Cooperstown.

28. Athletics (-1): Shea Langeliers' untimely meniscus tear might buy him one more year in Yolo County.

29. Colorado Rockies (-1): Cole Carigg manages the lone hit – a home run – off Jacob Misiorowski.

30. Los Angeles Angels (-1): Trade Jose Soriano? Sadly, it probably makes sense.

U.S. TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS WINNERS AND LOSERS

Familiar names, new ones alike impress

Tyler Dragon
USA TODAY

Champions were crowned at the 2026 USA Track and Field National Championships.

The U.S. track and field championships were held in New York City for the first time since 1991, at Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island.

Noah Lyles, Sha'Carri Richardson, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden and Tara Davis-Woodhall competed during the four-day track and field competition.

The championships serve as the biggest track and field event in the country this year. Every American athlete is attempting to build momentum and confidence ahead of the 2027 World Track and Field Championships in Beijing and later the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

USA TODAY Sports analyzes the winners and losers from the 2026 USA Track and Field National Championships:

WINNERS

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden wins big in 200

The fastest woman in the country title still belongs to Jefferson-Wooden even though she decided not to run the 100.

July 26 was just another day in the office for Jefferson-Wooden as she easily won the women's 200, crossing the finish line with a season-best time of 21.69.

Jefferson-Wooden won by a couple of meters. She was the only runner to run sub-22 seconds.

The reigning world champion in the 100 and 200 continues to show she's currently the fastest woman in the world.

Sha'Carri Richardson victorious in 100

Richardson's chief competitor, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, didn't compete in the women's 100, but Richardson still deserves credit for crossing the finish line in first as the heavy favorite.

Richardson pulled even with the field around 40 meters, surged past the other sprinters and crossed the finish line comfortably in first.

Richardson is the second woman to win three U.S. 100m titles since 2000.

Noah Lyles wins 100, sustains minor injury in 200

Lyles typically shines when the lights are at their brightest.

Lyles ran a blistering and world-leading 9.79 to win his third national title in the men's 100. The confident Lyles delivered a message to his fellow competitors after being crowned the fastest man in America once again.

However, the good vibes ended for Lyles as he tried to go for his sixth national title in the 200. The 29-year-old sprinter suffered a cramp as he rounded the turn. Lyles was able to finish the race, but he was well out of contention.

Lyles told NBC Sports that he was "fine" following his disappointing finish in the 200, which is good news for one of track and field's biggest stars.

Teenager Cooper Lutkenhaus steals show in men's 800

The 17-year-old prodigy ran away from the other distance runners in the men's 800. Lutkenhaus was in third at the start of the second and final lap but separated from the runners with roughly 200 meters to go, posting a gold medal-winning time of 1:43.48. The win was Lutkenhaus' first national title.

Christopher Robinson wins gold in 400 hurdles

A new national champion was crowned in the 400 hurdles.

Robinson ran a clean race and eventually separated himself from the other competitors down the backstretch to win the men's 400 hurdles with a season-best time of 47.61.

The win was Robinson's first national title. Robinson was an NCAA champ in the event in 2023.

Chase Jackson dominates women's shot put

Jackson won the women's shot put competition after her first throw of 67 feet, 2 ¾ inches. But the women's shot put American record holder saved her best for last when she tossed 67 feet, 5 ¼ inches on her final attempt.

Jackson won the shot put competition by more than 4 feet.

Nikki Hiltz wins fourth consecutive title in women's 1,500

Hiltz was in second down the home stretch but dug deep as she fought hard as she raced toward the finish line. She narrowly edged Addy Wiley and Emily Mackay to win her fourth national title in a row in the women's 1,500.

Best for last

The four-day U.S championships saved its best race for last as the men's 110 hurdles was decided in a photo finish.

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden wins the women's 200-meter heat in 22.50 during the USATF Championships at Icahn Stadium. KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

Cordell Tinch was slow out of the blocks and had work hard to catch Bradley Franklin. Tinch built up enough momentum to catch Franklin at the final hurdle, and then he made an impressive lean at the line to just barely edge Franklin.

The two sprinters anxiously waited for a few moments until the photo finish confirmed Tinch was victorious at 13.00 (12.993) over Franklin's 13.00 (12.997).

Track and field fans

Hayward Field at the University of Oregon hosted the U.S. Track and Field championships for the 14th time last year. It was refreshing to see the biggest track and field competition in the U.S. held at another location. The fact that the track meet was held in the largest media market in the country should also help with the sport's exposure.

The NBC Sports cameras even showed New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani in attendance.

LOSERS

Justin Robinson disqualified after winning men's 400

Robinson pulled off a huge upset by winning the 400, running a 44.31. Robinson, though, was later disqualified for a lane violation. Chris Bailey, who originally came in second with a time of 44.39, was named the winner.

Quincy Hall unable to get out of first round

Hall shocked the track and field world with a come-from-behind win in the men's 400 at the 2024 Paris Olympics. He hasn't had the same success since.

Hall didn't qualify past the first round in the men's 400. He ran a 46.47 and finished sixth in his opening round heat.

Hall ran 43.40 when he won gold at the Paris Games.

Christian Coleman just misses men's 100 podium

Coleman was one of the favorites to win a medal in the men's 100. He had a pretty solid start running out of lane four in the final but crossed the finish line in fourth (9.93), just missing out on a bronze medal.

Women's long jump competition

Tara Davis-Woodhall lost her first long jump competition in nearly three years in dramatic fashion.

Davis-Woodhall leaped 23 feet and 6 inches on her final jump to claim first place over Alyssa Jones, who had jumped 22 feet, 10 inches. But upon review, it was determined that the reigning Olympic and world champion long jumper had fouled on her final jump and the gold medal was awarded to Jones.

Davis-Woodhall's best legal jump of 22 feet, 7 ¾ inches was good enough for third place.

The disqualification was a tough way for Davis-Woodhall to lose a gold medal.

The silver lining is she did show off her versatility during the championships. Davis-Woodhall ran a 12.57 to finish third behind gold medalist Alia Armstrong (12.38) and silver medalist Alaysha Johnson (12.42) in the women's 100 hurdles on Saturday.

The rest of the women's discus, women's high jump fields

The women's discus had a predictable outcome because Valarie Sion has dominated the event for nearly a decade.

Sion threw 228 feet, 2 inches on her fourth attempt to win her eighth national title in the discus. The two-time Olympic gold medalist won by just over 7 feet. Cierra Jackson, the 2025 NCAA women's discus champion, came in second with a throw of 221 feet, 1 inch.

The same can be said for the women's high jump.

Vashti Cunningham cleared the bar at 6 feet, 3 ½ inches to win her eighth national championship in the event.

The women's discus and women's high jump at nationals has become a battle for second place until further notice.

Follow USA TODAY Sports' Tyler Dragon on X @TheTylerDragon

Utah Talons sweep Chicago Bandits for AUSL championship

Mitchell Northam
USA TODAY

Montana Fouts struck out four batters in a complete game while Jadelyn Allchin, Bri Ellis and Sahvanna Jaquish each hit home runs as the Utah Talons repeated as champions of the Athletes Unlimited Softball League on July 26.

The Talons swept the Chicago Bandits in a best-of-three series, winning 2-1 on Saturday and 6-1 on Sunday at Davis Diamond in College Station, Texas.

Before finding a permanent home in Utah, the Talons won the inaugural AUSL Championship last season. Their goal this year was to defend that title.

"The first time I met all of them on a call in March, I asked them what their mission was, and they said to repeat," Talons coach Cindy Ball-Malone said. "All I'm going to say is: job well done. Incredibly proud of them, and I'm pinching myself with this opportunity. I feel so blessed."

Utah's Hannah Flippen celebrates a home run during an AUSL game between the Spark and the Talons on July 9 at Oklahoma Christian University. SARAH PHIPPS/THE OKLAHOMAN

Allchin, an outfielder from UCLA, was named MVP of the championship series. She went 3-for-6 with three RBIs and three runs scored across the two wins. Her two-run homer just 11 pitches into Game 2 set the tone for the clincher.

Ellis, the AUSL Comeback Player of the Year and former Arkansas star, all but sealed the win for the Talons in the fifth inning when she blasted a solo dinger over Texas A&M's scoreboard.

Fouts allowed eight hits but was at her best when the pressure was on as the Bandits went 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position on Sunday. Georgina Corrick pitched Game 1 of the championship series, allowing just four hits while striking out five for the Talons.

The outing from Fouts completes a stellar season in which she was named AUSL Pitcher of the Year and set a single-season record with 67 strikeouts.

Sunday's game marked the third sellout in AUSL postseason history, including the second sellout in as many days. The series between the Bandits and Talons caps off AUSL's second full season of play and its first where teams were based in cities, rather than touring across the country.

In the early years of this fledgling professional softball league, the Talons seem to be on their way toward establishing the AUSL's first dynasty.

For the league in the bigger picture, the AUSL looks like a success. Led by Commissioner Kim Ng, backed by MLB and with an impressive media rights package that featured games on ESPN, MLB Network and ABC, the AUSL averaged 198,000 viewers this regular season, up 183% from last year. The league also saw 23 regular-season sellouts and merchandise sales increase by about 200%.

That lines up with the growth that the sport is seeing at the college level, where ESPN delivered the most-watched Women's College World Series on record this year. Momentum for softball is expected to keep building as the sport returns to the Summer Olympics in 2028.

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Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Runway Equipment and Specialized Airfield Systems with Related Services to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.

Sourcewell encourages the use of Small, Minority-owned, Women's Business Enterprise, Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (S/M/WBE/VBE) suppliers both as prime and subcontractors and encourages the participation of these suppliers in the solicitation process.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than September 8, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

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FOR THE RECORD

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MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	62	43	.590	–
N.Y. Yankees	59	46	.562	3
Boston	54	50	.519	7½
Baltimore	51	55	.481	11½
Toronto	48	58	.453	14½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	55	49	.529	–
Cleveland	54	53	.505	2½
Minnesota	53	54	.495	3½
Detroit	50	56	.472	6
Kansas City	45	62	.421	11½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	53	52	.505	–
Seattle	52	54	.491	1½
Houston	52	55	.486	2
Athletics	44	61	.419	9
L.A. Angels	42	64	.396	11½

NATIONAL LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	62	43	.590	–
Philadelphia	57	49	.538	5½
Washington	54	52	.509	8½
Miami	52	54	.491	10½
N.Y. Mets	44	62	.415	18½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	66	39	.629	–
Chicago Cubs	59	46	.562	7
Pittsburgh	54	52	.509	12½
St. Louis	53	52	.505	13
Cincinnati	49	55	.471	16½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	67	39	.632	–
Arizona	55	51	.519	12
San Diego	53	53	.500	14
San Francisco	44	61	.419	22½
Colorado	42	65	.393	25½

Sunday's Scores
Tampa Bay 1, Cleveland 0
Washington 10, Arizona 7
Atlanta 3, Baltimore 2, 11 innings
Boston 6, Toronto 1
Pittsburgh 8, Chicago Cubs 7
Kansas City 5, Detroit 4
San Diego 5, Miami 3
N.Y. Mets 8, L.A. Dodgers 3
Chi. White Sox 12, Houston 3
Minnesota 11, Athletics 8
Milwaukee 11, Colorado 2
Cincinnati 5, St. Louis 3, 10 innings
Seattle 6, Texas 4
L.A. Angels 4, San Francisco 3
Philadelphia 11, N.Y. Yankees 4

Monday's Games
Seattle at Texas
Baltimore at Detroit
Philadelphia at Miami
Arizona at Pittsburgh
Toronto at Washington
Cleveland at Cincinnati
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis
Houston at L.A. Angels
Boston at Athletics
Milwaukee at San Francisco .

Tuesday's Games
Baltimore at Detroit, 6:40 p.m.
Texas at Tampa Bay, 6:40 p.m.
Philadelphia at Miami, 6:40 p.m.
Arizona at Pittsburgh, 6:40 p.m.
Toronto at Washington, 6:45 p.m.
Cleveland at Cincinnati, 7:10 p.m.
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Kansas City at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis, 7:45 p.m.
Houston at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Boston at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
Colorado at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
Milwaukee at San Francisco, 9:45 p.m.
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Philadelphia at Miami, 12:10 p.m.
Arizona at Pittsburgh, 12:35 p.m.
Toronto at Washington, 1:05 p.m.
Baltimore at Detroit, 1:10 p.m.
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets, 1:10 p.m.
Milwaukee at San Francisco, 3:45 p.m.
Colorado at San Diego, 4:10 p.m.
Texas at Tampa Bay, 6:40 p.m.
Cleveland at Cincinnati, 7:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Kansas City at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis, 7:45 p.m.
Houston at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Boston at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	17	10	.630	–
Atlanta	16	10	.615	½
N.Y. Liberty	15	12	.556	2
Washington	14	12	.538	2½
Toronto	10	16	.385	6½
Chicago	9	18	.333	8
Connecticut	7	20	.259	10

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	22	6	.786	–
Golden State	19	8	.704	2½
Las Vegas	18	8	.692	3
Dallas	18	9	.667	3½
Portland	11	16	.407	10½
L.A. Sparks	10	16	.385	11
Phoenix	10	18	.357	12
Seattle	6	23	.207	16½

Tuesday's Games
Connecticut at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Indiana at Seattle, 9:30 p.m.
Portland at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at L.A. Sparks, 10 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Atlanta at Dallas, 8 p.m.
Golden State at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	12	2	3	39	33	12
Inter Miami CF	11	2	4	37	43	30
New England	9	5	2	29	26	19
Chicago	8	6	2	26	30	22
NY City FC	7	6	4	25	30	23
Charlotte FC	7	6	4	25	28	25
Cincinnati	6	6	5	23	41	42
NY Red Bulls	6	7	4	22	26	37
D.C. United	5	5	7	22	24	27
Orlando City	6	9	2	20	28	44
Columbus	5	8	4	19	24	26
Toronto FC	3	7	7	16	23	31
CF Montreal	4	10	3	15	22	33
Philadelphia	3	10	4	13	22	31
Atlanta	3	11	3	12	17	30

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	3	3	33	37	16
Los Angeles FC	10	5	3	33	34	18
San Jose	10	4	3	33	35	20
Real Salt Lake	8	6	2	26	28	24
Houston	8	6	2	26	23	24
FC Dallas	7	5	5	26	32	25
Saint Louis	7	6	4	25	23	23
Seattle	7	6	3	24	19	20
Minnesota	6	6	5	23	19	24
Portland	6	8	3	21	31	32
LA Galaxy	5	7	6	21	24	29
San Diego FC	5	7	5	20	31	28
Colorado	6	10	1	19	26	25
Austin FC	4	8	5	17	22	35
Sporting KC	4	11	2	14	18	44

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Saturday's Scores
NY Red Bulls 0, Charlotte FC 2
Columbus 2, Cincinnati 1
CF Montreal 0, Inter Miami CF 1
New England 4, Atlanta 1
Philadelphia 1, Seattle 0
NY City FC 3, Chicago 1
D.C. United 2, Toronto FC 1
Saint Louis 1, Colorado 0
Houston 3, Austin FC 0
Minnesota 0, Vancouver 0
Orlando City 1, Nashville 0
San Diego FC 1, FC Dallas 0
San Jose 1, LA Galaxy 1
Portland 2, Real Salt Lake 1
Los Angeles FC 4, Sporting KC 0

Wednesday's Game
MLS All-Stars vs Liga MX All-Stars at Charlotte, 8 p.m.

Friday's Game
Toronto FC at NY City FC, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Nashville at D.C. United, 7:30 p.m.
San Jose at Cincinnati, 7:30 p.m.
Columbus at Inter Miami CF, 7:30 p.m.
Atlanta at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.
New England at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Orlando City at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles FC at Vancouver, 7:30 p.m.
Charlotte FC at Chicago, 8:30 p.m.
Houston at Sporting KC, 8:30 p.m.
Real Salt Lake at Saint Louis, 8:30 p.m.
San Diego FC at Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.
Austin FC at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
Seattle at Portland, 10:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at LA Galaxy, 10:30 p.m.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	10	3	3	33	25	12
Gotham	9	3	4	31	21	12
Utah	9	4	3	30	26	17
San Diego	9	6	2	29	23	19
Portland	8	5	4	28	27	20
Kansas City	8	7	1	25	23	23
Orlando	7	8	2	23	22	21
Angel City	7	7	1	22	23	16
North Carolina	6	6	3	21	21	23
Seattle	6	7	2	20	17	19
Denver	5	6	4	19	21	20
Houston	5	7	4	19	19	24
Boston	5	8	4	19	18	23
Bay	5	7	3	18	16	20
Chicago	4	12	0	12	8	31
Louisville	3	10	2	11	18	28

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Friday's Scores
Orlando 1, Chicago 0
Houston 1, Bay 0
Portland 2, Gotham 2

Saturday's Scores
Boston 1, Kansas City 0
Utah 4, North Carolina 1

Sunday's Scores
Seattle 2, San Diego 0
Washington 1, Denver 0
Louisville 2, Angel City 1

Wednesday's Games
Louisville at Kansas City, 8 p.m.
Washington at Utah, 9 p.m.
Gotham at Bay, 10 p.m.

Friday's Game
Orlando at North Carolina, 8 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Chicago at Louisville, 4 p.m.
Angel City at Kansas City, 6:30 p.m.
Gotham at Houston, 8 p.m.
Seattle at Bay, 8:45 p.m.

Sunday's Games
San Diego at Washington, 4 p.m.
Portland at Utah, 7 p.m.
Boston at Denver, 9 p.m.

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup Series
Brickyard 400
presented by PPG
Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Sunday
1. (7) Corey Heim, 23XI Racing, 160, 0 points.
2. (23) Christopher Bell, Joe Gibbs, 160, 35.
3. (19) Joey Logano, Team Penske, 160, 34.
4. (11) Chase Briscoe, Joe Gibbs, 160, 36.
5. (5) Denny Hamlin, Joe Gibbs, 160, 44.
6. (16) Brad Keselowski, RFK Racing, 160, 31.
7. (26) Josh Berry, Wood Brothers, 160, 30.
8. (34) Ryan Preece, RFK Racing, 160, 33.
9. (1) Carson Hocevar, Spire MS, 160, 40.
10. (3) Tyler Reddick, 23XI Racing, 160, 28.
11. (15) Chris Buescher, RFK Racing, 160, 28.
12. (4) Ty Gibbs, Joe Gibbs Racing, 160, 43.
13. (12) Cole Custer, Haas Factory, 160, 24.
14. (35) Austin Cindric, Team Penske, 160, 23.
15. (30) Zane Smith, Front Row MS, 160, 22.
16. (25) Shane Van Gisbergen, Trackhouse Racing, 160, 21.
17. (2) Daniel Suárez, Spire MS, 160, 25.
18. (6) Michael McDowell, Spire MS, 160, 30.
19. (8) Alex Bowman, Hendrick MS, 160, 18.
20. (24) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, HYAK Motorsports, 160, 17.
21. (21) William Byron, Hendrick MS, 160, 22.
22. (33) Noah Gragson, Front Row Motorsports, 160, 15.
23. (22) Ross Chastain, Trackhouse, 160, 24.
24. (36) Todd Gilliland, Front Row Motorsports, 160, 22.
25. (9) AJ Allmendinger, Kaulig, 160, 12.
26. (13) Ryan Blaney, Team Penske, 160, 11.
27. (14) Erik Jones, Legacy Motor Club, 160, 12.
28. (29) Bubba Wallace, 23XI Racing, 160, 9.
29. (20) Austin Dillon, Richard Childress Racing, 160, 8.
30. (28) Ty Dillon, Kaulig Racing, 160, 7.
31. (37) Cody Ware, Rick Ware Racing, 160, 6.
32. (17) John H. Nemechek, Legacy MC, 158, 5.
33. (32) Austin Hill, Richard Childress Racing, 125, Accident 0.
34. (31) Connor Zilisch, Trackhouse Racing, 122, Accident 3.
35. (38) Casey Mears, Beard Motorsports, 121, Accident 2.
36. (18) Riley Herbst, 23XI, 120, Accident 1.
37. (27) Chase Elliott, Hendrick MS, 119, 1.
38. (39) Daniel Dye, Live Fast Motorsports, 93, Accident 0.
39. (10) Kyle Larson, Hendrick Motorsports, 43, Accident 1.

Pogacar's Tour dynasty reaches vintage 5th title

Vincent Daheron
REUTERS

PARIS – Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar secured a record-equaling fifth Tour de France title after safely navigating the final stage, won by Mathieu van der Poel, to seal a third consecutive crown in cycling's greatest race.

The 27-year-old UAE Team Emirates XRGcyclist, affectionately known as "Pogi", only needed to avoid a race-ending mishap on the run into Paris on July 26 to join Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain as a five-time Tour champion.

Belgium's Remco Evenepoel finished second overall, while Mexico's Isaac del Toro rounded out the overall podium in third.

"Thank-you to all the fans and to all of France for hosting this great race," Pogacar said. "Thank-you to my competitors for putting on a great show. We fought hard over the last three weeks."

Van der Poel and Pogacar broke away on the final ascent of Montmartre with around 10 kilometres remaining and took a slender advantage into the run to the Champs-Elysees as the chasing group closed relentlessly.

Pogacar's challenge faded inside the final kilometer, but Van der Poel pressed on to secure victory in a photo finish ahead of Alpecin-Premier Tech teammate Jasper Philipsen, with Mads Pedersen of Lidl-Trek in third.

"When I was sick last year and I had to watch the stage on television, I was already thinking about this moment," said Van der Poel, 31.

"The way it went, it's a dream. It's incredible. It was super hard, and to be up there with the best rider in the world, all my respect for Tadej.

"I thought we were going to get caught back, then I was just thinking about this moment. I put my head down in the last five hundred meters. I just went as hard as I could ...

"I'm super happy. I have a few races I still wanted to win in my career and this was one of them."

Pogacar underlined his supremacy throughout the Tour by claiming five stage victories.

Tadej Pogacar wears the yellow jersey after completing the final stage of the Tour de France on July 26.
GONZALO FUENTES/REUTERS

His path to a third straight yellow jersey became less complicated when two-time Tour winner Jonas Vingegaard, widely regarded as his principal challenger, withdrew after a crash on Stage 15.

The Tour's traditional finale in Paris was shortened after security forces were redeployed to help tackle wildfires near Bordeaux. As a result, Stage 21, which customarily takes the peloton into Paris before several laps of the Champs-Elysees, was reduced to 89 kilometers from the 133 originally scheduled.

This year's race also produced a remarkable first: no rider from France, Italy or Spain won a stage, making it the first Tour de France without a stage victory from any of the three nations that created and host cycling's Grand Tours.

Pogacar's latest triumph caps three weeks of racing since the Grand Depart in Barcelona and further cements his status as the dominant rider of his generation.

WEATHER

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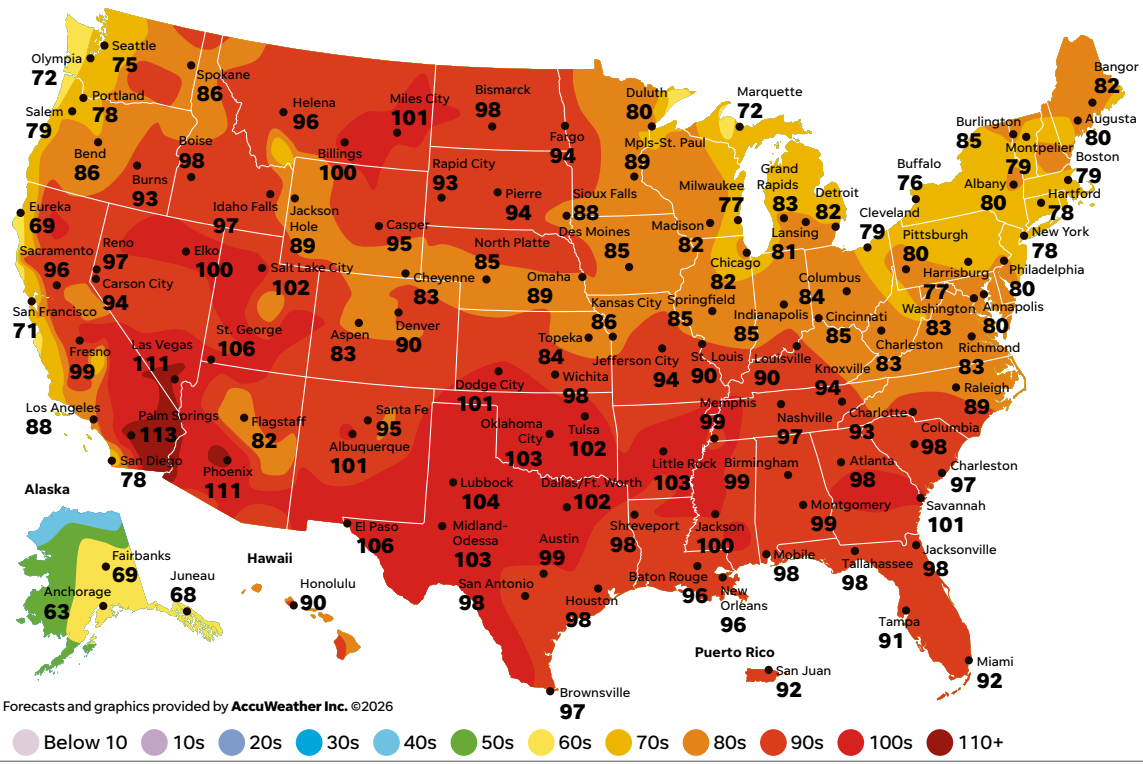
TODAY'S FORECAST

A massive heat dome over the western **United States** will spread warm air from **Texas** to **Montana** today. Temperatures will be 5-15 degrees above average for most, some places may approach daily records. It will be a few degrees cooler across the **Pacific Northwest**. Cooler air will surge into the **Great Lakes** as the stormy corridor shifts east.

There will be a strong breeze across the region and plenty of sunshine. Thunderstorms will drench an area from **New England** to the **Carolinas**. The primary threat will be flooding, though there may be severe thunderstorms.

The most likely corridor of damaging wind gusts will be from **Pennsylvania** to **South Carolina**. Outside of spotty storms in **Florida** and the **Rockies**, the rest of the nation will be dry.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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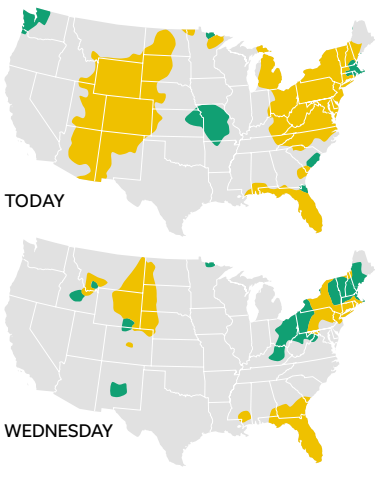
PRECIPITATION FORECAST

T-storms Rain Snow Ice/mix



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Sunday

HOTTEST: 121° Death Valley, Calif.
COLDEST: 36° Truckee, Calif.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index **(AQI)**

ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	CHARLOTTE
TUE Sunny, hot 98/77	TUE Heavy t-storm 81/68	TUE Shower 79/64	TUE Heavy t-storm 93/73
WED Clearing 92/71	WED Stray t-storm 86/66	WED Rain 70/65	WED Partly sunny 92/67
THU Sunny 92/68	THU Partly sunny 85/65	THU A few showers 71/66	THU Sunny, nice 89/68
AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Good	AQI Good

CHICAGO	DALLAS/FT. WORTH	DENVER	DETROIT
TUE Not as warm 82/64	TUE Hot 102/81	TUE Heavy t-storm 90/63	TUE Stray t-storm 82/62
WED Sunny 84/67	WED Hot 103/82	WED Stray t-storm 89/66	WED Breezy 81/59
THU Partly sunny 88/70	THU Hot 102/83	THU Stray t-storm 92/64	THU Sunny 84/63
AQI Moderate	AQI Unhealthy s/g	AQI Moderate	AQI Good

HONOLULU	HOUSTON	LAS VEGAS	LOS ANGELES
TUE Showers around 90/77	TUE Sunny, warm 98/78	TUE Hot 111/88	TUE Mostly sunny 88/68
WED Rain, wind 87/76	WED Very warm 97/80	WED Hot 111/86	WED Mostly sunny 88/66
THU A few showers 90/77	THU Sunny, hot 100/79	THU Hot 112/89	THU Partly sunny 87/66
AQI Good	AQI Unhealthy s/g	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

MIAMI	MPLS-ST. PAUL	NEW ORLEANS	NEW YORK
TUE Heavy t-storm 92/79	TUE Hazy sun, warm 89/72	TUE Hot 96/79	TUE T-storms 78/68
WED A P.M. t-storm 93/79	WED Stray t-storm 93/73	WED Stray t-storm 97/78	WED T-storms 79/66
THU T-storms 95/80	THU Stray t-storm 91/70	THU Stray t-storm 93/77	THU Shower 76/68
AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

ORLANDO	PHILADELPHIA	PHOENIX	SALT LAKE CITY
TUE T-storm 91/78	TUE T-storms 80/70	TUE Stray t-storm 111/92	TUE Sunny, warm 102/79
WED A P.M. t-storm 92/77	WED Stray t-storm 82/69	WED Hot 111/93	WED Some sun 100/75
THU T-storms 86/76	THU Shower 81/68	THU Sunny, hot 115/91	THU Very warm 103/79
AQI Good	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Unhealthy s/g

SAN DIEGO	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	WASHINGTON
TUE Partly sunny 78/68	TUE Breezy 71/58	TUE A P.M. shower 75/56	TUE Heavy t-storm 83/70
WED Partly sunny 78/70	WED Breezy 73/57	WED Clearing 75/55	WED Stray t-storm 86/70
THU Some sun 78/70	THU Breezy 72/57	THU Clouding up 76/56	THU Mostly sunny 85/70
AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Good	AQI Good

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	WED
Akron, Ohio	79/61t	75/58sh
Albany, N.Y.	80/68t	75/64r
Albuquerque	101/73t	96/73t
Allentown, Pa.	76/64t	77/65t
Amarillo, Texas	106/73s	103/73s
Anaheim, Calif.	88/66pc	88/66s
Anchorage, Alaska	63/52c	67/54pc
Aspen, Colo.	83/55t	80/53t
Atlantic City, N.J.	79/70t	83/69t
Augusta, Ga.	99/77pc	95/70pc
Austin, Texas	99/76pc	100/76pc
Bakersfield, Calif.	98/70s	101/72s
Baton Rouge, La.	96/78s	97/78t
Billings, Mont.	100/69pc	94/67c
Birmingham, Ala.	99/77s	91/71pc
Bismarck, N.D.	98/66t	100/70t
Boise, Idaho	98/63s	98/66s
Buffalo, N.Y.	76/64t	72/64sh
Burlington, Vt.	85/67t	73/63r
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	85/63h	87/66s
Charleston, S.C.	97/79pc	97/75t
Charleston, W.Va.	83/65t	79/58pc
Cheyenne, Wyo.	83/60t	85/63t
Cincinnati	85/65t	83/63s
Cleveland	79/64t	77/62c
Colorado Springs	88/60t	85/61t
Columbia, S.C.	98/77pc	94/70pc
Columbus, Ohio	84/63t	79/58sh
Corpus Christi, Texas	95/79w	97/79w
Dayton, Ohio	83/63t	81/60s
Daytona Beach, Fla.	95/78t	96/77t
Des Moines, Iowa	85/68s	90/69s
Duluth, Minn.	80/61t	85/66t
Durham, N.C.	88/69t	89/65pc
El Paso, Texas	106/82pc	107/79s
Fairbanks, Alaska	69/43s	68/53c
Flagstaff, Ariz.	82/56t	85/55t
Fargo, N.D.	94/69h	101/73t
Fort Myers, Fla.	89/80t	91/79t
Fort Smith, Ark.	102/82pc	97/79t
Fort Wayne, Ind.	83/61s	81/59s
Fresno, Calif.	99/68s	101/70s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	83/58s	83/59s
Green Bay, Wis.	80/57h	85/62s
Greensboro, N.C.	87/69t	88/63pc
Greenville, S.C.	94/74t	91/65s
Harrisburg, Pa.	77/69t	80/67t
Hartford, Conn.	78/66sh	76/64t
Indianapolis	85/62s	83/62s
Islip, N.Y.	77/70t	79/68t
Jackson, Miss.	100/78s	96/75t
Jacksonville, Fla.	98/79sh	98/77t
Jefferson City, Mo.	94/72pc	87/67s
Kansas City	86/71pc	86/71s
Key West, Fla.	90/83t	91/82t
Knoxville, Tenn.	94/72t	89/64pc
Laredo, Texas	104/80s	104/80s
Lexington, Ky.	89/66s	86/61sh
Lincoln, Neb.	85/70pc	91/71t
Little Rock, Ark.	103/81s	93/74pc
Long Beach, Calif.	83/68pc	83/69pc
Louisville, Ky.	90/68pc	87/67s
Lubbock, Texas	104/74s	102/74s
Madison, Wis.	82/59h	85/65s
Manchester, N.H.	80/66sh	72/65r
Memphis, Tenn.	99/78s	92/73pc
Milwaukee	77/64h	81/64s
Mobile, Ala.	98/77t	96/76t
Modesto, Calif.	96/63s	98/64s
Montgomery, Ala.	99/76s	94/72pc
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	91/78pc	91/72t
Nags Head, N.C.	84/73pc	83/73t
Nashville, Tenn.	97/72t	91/67s
Newark, N.J.	78/70t	82/69t
New Haven, Conn.	77/71t	80/66t
Norfolk, Va.	85/71t	87/72t
Oakland, Calif.	74/58pc	75/58s
Oklahoma City	103/76s	102/76pc
Omaha, Neb.	89/71s	91/72s
Palm Springs, Calif.	113/85s	113/86s
Pensacola, Fla.	95/79t	97/78t
Pierre, S.D.	94/67t	97/69t
Pittsburgh	80/64t	77/61sh
Portland, Maine	75/63t	68/60sh
Portland, Ore.	78/59pc	80/57s
Providence, R.I.	78/66sh	72/64t
Raleigh, N.C.	89/71t	90/66pc
Rapid City, S.D.	93/66t	97/66t
Reno, Nev.	97/62s	98/63s
Richmond, Va.	83/69t	87/67pc
Rochester, N.Y.	72/64t	71/63t
Sacramento, Calif.	96/59s	98/60s
San Antonio	98/78pc	98/78pc
San Jose, Calif.	81/59s	83/58s
Santa Fe, N.M.	95/64t	93/64t
Sarasota, Fla.	89/81t	90/80t
Savannah, Ga.	101/80sh	97/76t
Scottsdale, Ariz.	109/88t	108/89s
Shreveport, La.	98/79s	100/80t
Sioux Falls, S.D.	88/69pc	93/71t
South Bend, Ind.	78/58s	79/59s
Spokane, Wash.	86/57s	86/57s
Springfield, Mo.	95/75pc	89/73pc
Springfield, Ill.	85/60s	84/61s
St. Louis	90/70s	88/71s
St. Petersburg, Fla.	91/80t	92/81t
Syracuse, N.Y.	74/65t	74/64t
Tallahassee, Fla.	98/78t	98/75t
Tampa, Fla.	91/82t	92/81t
Toledo, Ohio	84/61t	83/56s
Topeka, Kan.	84/73pc	84/74t
Tucson, Ariz.	103/82pc	103/82pc
Tupelo, Miss.	98/79s	90/71pc
Tulsa, Okla.	102/80s	100/78t
Virginia Beach, Va.	83/71t	83/73t
Wichita, Kan.	98/76pc	97/76t
Wilmington, Del.	78/67t	82/67t
Winston-Salem, N.C.	88/70t	88/66pc
Worcester, Mass.	75/64sh	70/62r

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	WED
Beijing	94/78h	96/80t
Buenos Aires	61/50c	58/50s
Cancun, Mexico	92/75sh	93/77s
Dubai, UAE	106/93h	112/94h
Frankfurt	87/64s	99/65s
Hong Kong	88/80t	85/79sh
Istanbul	90/73s	87/70s
Jerusalem	87/68s	89/70s
Johannesburg	66/40s	63/42h
London	87/62pc	93/63s
Mexico City	75/56r	75/56r
Montreal	82/67t	73/65t
Moscow	82/61t	67/59sh
Mumbai, India	87/82r	87/81r
Paris	91/66s	102/69s
Rio de Janeiro	81/71h	88/72s
Rome	92/72s	95/71s
Seoul	89/77t	90/76pc
Singapore	89/80t	88/79sh
Sydney	72/52s	68/45w
Toronto	77/64t	76/61sh
Tokyo	87/77t	91/76sh

NFL TRAINING CAMPS

Positive vibes pulse for Giants, Jets

The vibe check. It's something that can't be defined, only felt. In other areas of the world, we would call it a "State of the Union Address" or even the "stock market." Those reveal different kinds of vibes, related to the direction of a country or the health of its economy. When it comes to the NFL, vibes aren't typically used as a unit of measurement. We look at things like free agency, draft class, coaching and the roster as a whole. It's more analytical in nature, but that doesn't always sell tickets, merchandise and hope. The allure of sports, at least in the NFL, is that anyone can win on any given Sunday. Those on-field dynamics might not swing a team's way, but the unspoken variables could make all the difference. As training camps near, it only makes sense to take the league's temperature.

Quarterback Fernando Mendoza flashes his jersey at his introductory news conference, flanked by Raiders general manager John Spytek, left, and coach Klint Kubiak. Mendoza signed his rookie deal July 23. KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES

Nick Brinkerhoff
USA TODAY

Here's a vibe check for all 32 teams and where they land in the leaguewide rankings:

32. Indianapolis Colts

You know that feeling when they get your order wrong at the restaurant? That's how the Colts feel going into the season. No first-round pick, no big signings. All they got was extensions for Daniel Jones, coming off a torn Achilles, and Alec Pierce. Contending feels like a long way away.

31. Miami Dolphins

The Dolphins are throwing off some new house energy this offseason. They are building, but it'll take a long time for this place to feel like a home. Next offseason can't come soon enough for Miami.

30. Jacksonville Jaguars

There's always one person in the group project that gets credit for doing nothing. The Jags are just the NFL version of that after a quiet offseason and now they won't even get to see Travis Hunter primarily at receiver next season.

29. Pittsburgh Steelers

The Steelers hit their ceiling a long time ago and all it did was give them a headache. Pittsburgh's streak of seasons with a winning record has trapped the team in a vicious cycle of trying to win when it's time to let go. This year the Steelers are throwing a retirement party for Aaron Rodgers and inviting all of his friends. Get your wild-card round tickets now.

28. Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Mike Evans? Gone. Lavonte David? Retired. It feels like a sinking ship and we don't know if the life vests are on board. The NFC South is trending up while the Bucs fade. This team could use a hero and some new energy after finishing off a miserable 2025.

27. Arizona Cardinals

Mike LaFleur and Jeremiyah Love are flying this team out of the deep, dark depths. The Cards are still a year away from a new quarterback, which limits the vibes for this season.

26. Detroit Lions

The window is closing rapidly and "Unc" status is within reach. Detroit better hope it nailed the offensive coordinator hire.

25. Houston Texans

The Texans should have good vibes. Instead, Houston is plagued by this weird in-between feeling that contributes to a sense of impending doom brought on by C.J. Stroud's struggles last season.

24. Atlanta Falcons

Imagine you're stuck in the famous Atlanta traffic. Brutal, right? On the bright side, the A/C is chilly, the radio is blasting and there's some daylight up ahead. You'll suffer in the short term, but at least the car has plenty of cool features. The Falcons might have it all. They just need a new driver and he'll be arriving next offseason. Until then, enjoy the six or seven wins.

23. Carolina Panthers

Much like its vinegar-based barbecue sauce, Carolina is simply just another version of its Texas counterparts in Houston. The Panthers invested in the defense, but will they be held back by a shaky quarterback situation? Carolina heads into the season knowing its ceiling is capped and that's tough to get excited about.

22. Green Bay Packers

The Packers aren't known for making a lot of noise in the offseason, but this one feels exceptionally quiet after the Micah Parsons' blockbuster last year. Green Bay's history, tradition and overall small-town love of football lifts the vibes for a team that doesn't look all that different from the one that keeps falling short in the playoffs.

21. Cleveland Browns

Wins will be in short supply again this season in Cleveland. However, fans can look to a new coaching staff for some optimism and an infusion of some young talent this offseason.

20. Chicago Bears

The Bears are no longer the hunters. Opponents know what they're up against and that will leave some wondering if the Bears peaked in 2025. It sounds crazy, but the same was true of the Lions after 2023 and look at where they are now. Ben Johnson's second season gives fans a reason for hope, however.

19. Philadelphia Eagles

A.J. Brown is gone, but so is Kevin Patullo. Losing a star hurts; however, a new one could emerge in Makai Lemon. Either way, there is a cautious optimism in Philadelphia even if it's not enough to land in the top half of the league.

18. Kansas City Chiefs

Travis Kelce is back. Patrick Mahomes is healthy. It'll take a little more to turn things around even if the team is trending in the right direction again, but there is reason to believe as long as No. 15 is suiting up.

17. Washington Commanders

Washington dipped into the fountain of youth this offseason – at least on the football field. The Commanders realized that it was time for change and things weren't getting any better by relying on veterans at the end of their careers. That type of awareness should be commended as the Commanders look to bounce back in 2026 with Jayden Daniels and new offensive coordinator David Blough.

16. New England Patriots

The A.J. Brown trade was great, but that doesn't rid the organization of the Mike Vrabel-sized weight hanging over the team. This tug-of-war lands the Patriots in the perfect spot – the middle.

15. San Francisco 49ers

Not even the famed electric substation could zap the good vibes out of the Niners right now. Mike Evans and a revamped receiver room should have San Francisco dreaming big again – even if the injury bug keeps lurking in the shadows.

14. Baltimore Ravens

Is Jesse Minter just John Harbaugh in a different font? Does it matter? The Ravens still have an MVP-level quarterback and now they have a new voice leading the way with a young offensive coordinator that comes from the Ben Johnson tree in Declan Doyle. Expectations might've lowered, but this team can still fly high.

13. New Orleans Saints

It feels like a higher power intervened in New Orleans. The Saints were stuck in the post-Drew Brees era, with no cap space or hope. Then Kellen Moore arrived. Then Tyler Shough arrived. Now the Saints have arrived. New Orleans swung for the fences with the Jordyn Tyson pick in the draft and this team can make some real noise this season. Don't say you weren't warned.

12. Minnesota Vikings

The Vikings broke up with Sam Darnold and watched him thrive with someone else. Bad vibes. The Vikings are instead in a new relationship with Kyler Murray, which appears to be an improvement over J.J. McCarthy. Minnesota will forever chase what it had with Darnold, but Murray gives the team some legitimate reasons to be optimistic.

11. Los Angeles Chargers

It's clear that the Chargers are the Rams' understudy in the City of Angels. Just don't let that distract you from the positive vibes coming from the Bolts right now. Hiring Mike McDaniel ensures Justin Herbert and company will feature an exciting, creative offense going forward. If they can remain healthy, this team should be a real threat.

10. Tennessee Titans

"NashVegas" might not have the casinos like "Sin City," but the Titans are betting big going into the 2026 season. The checkbook was getting a workout as Tennessee went on a spending spree in free agency and also brought in a brand-new coaching staff. Time will tell if those moves work out, but we'd be buying some merch and some tickets to see this team before bringing down the curtain on the current Nissan Stadium.

9. Buffalo Bills

The Bills are throwing off some new-car energy after deciding that Sean McDermott took them as far as he could. Buffalo racked up the miles and experienced some memorable trips, but you're not getting up the mountain without some all-wheel drive. The team hopes Joe Brady is the guy who starts spinning all four tires in the right direction when it counts in the postseason. If nothing else, there's a new stadium to open and Josh Allen still plays for the team. There's a lot to be happy about.

8. Denver Broncos

Expectations are a mile high for the Broncos, which is exactly where they should be. On the doorstep of a Super Bowl appearance last season, Denver saw its ride come to an end after Bo Nix's unfortunate injury in the divisional round. An offseason trade for Jaylen Waddle should provide a spark for an offense that needed it and the defense promises to be dominant again. It's now or never in Denver.

7. Cincinnati Bengals

As long as Joe Burrow remains employed by the Bengals, it will be hard for this team to drop too far in terms of vibes. Cincinnati feels like it is capable of winning every game he starts. Now the Bengals decided to invest in a defense to assist in those winning efforts. It seems safe to say that Dexter "Sexy Dexy" Lawrence might be a vibes guy. That trade changed everything for the Bengals – in a good way.

6. Dallas Cowboys

Star talent seems to find a way to the star. Caleb Downs is the latest prospect to fall to the Cowboys' pick, half a decade after Micah Parsons fell to them. Of course, Parsons is no longer in Dallas, but it was that trade that has rebuilt the Cowboys defense. Fans of this team are never lacking confidence and team performance might just match that this season.

5. New York Jets

The New Jersey Turnpike often has a noticeable stench to it and it's nothing you'll find in candle form. Of course, that is thanks to the factories and marshes, even if the Jets and Giants are major contributors most seasons. This year might be different though. The green-and-white are no strangers to winning in the offseason – a strong draft and some popular veteran additions in the form of former Jets like Geno Smith and Demario Davis will do the trick in 2026. And with three first-round picks next offseason, hopes are high for Jets fans – maybe for good reason too.

4. Seattle Seahawks

The confetti is still falling, even if there are some reasons for concern after losing Klint Kubiak and Kenneth Walker III. Seattle is rightfully in a celebratory mood, tossing the Lombardi Trophy across the fish market like it was the catch of the day.

3. Los Angeles Rams

Walk down Rodeo Drive and you'll see Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and ... the Rams' team store? Those jerseys are all the rage this offseason, bringing championship vibes to Southern California – as if the Dodgers didn't bring enough of that already. Myles Garrett and Trent McDuffie were two of the biggest movers this offseason and both landed with the Rams. It's Super Bowl or bust for the league's new super team.

2. Las Vegas Raiders

If the Raiders were a person at the casino, management would be suspecting them of counting cards. It's all coming up Vegas this offseason. No. 1 pick in the draft? Check. Hiring arguably the top head coaching candidate? Check. Anchor the offensive line with one of the league's best? Absolutely. Getting a superstar back in a voided trade? Sure, why not? The Raiders have done nothing but win off-the-field since the Super Bowl. Now they'll hope that translates to victories on it. Still, the vibes might be at an all-time high.

1. New York Giants

"Big Blue" is no longer feeling blue. Not after hiring John Harbaugh. Not after Jaxson Dart's rookie season. No, there is legitimate optimism that hasn't been present around these parts in a long time. And no, the Brian Daboll and Daniel Jones arranged marriage wasn't one of those times for optimism. It goes back much further than that. The Giants are back on the NFL map. Fans just have to hope that this team, unlike Cam Skattebo, can stick the landing when the games begin.

The career of a legend

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NASCAR CUP SERIES BRICKYARD 400

'Heim time' earns 2nd win in 15 races

Zion Brown
The Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY Network

Driver Corey Heim and crew chief Robert "Bootie" Barker guided the No. 67 Field & Stream Toyota to victory lane July 26 in the NASCAR Cup Series Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. SEAN GARDNER/GETTY IMAGES

INDIANAPOLIS – *You're Heim Time, baby, the baddest man here.*

That's what 23XI Racing crew chief Robert "Bootie" Barker told Corey Heim over the driver's in-car radio ahead of the lap 126 restart in the Brickyard 400. Moments later, Heim got his No. 67 Toyota around the No. 5 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota of Denny Hamlin, who co-owns 23XI Racing with Michael Jordan.

Once Heim overtook his boss heading into Turn 1 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, there was no catching him in a race that only saw the lead exchanged during restarts and pit stops. Heim led the final 35 laps, all caution-free, to take the checkered flag and secure the second NASCAR Cup Series win of his career July 26.

"He believes me, and I do believe in him," Barker said about his pep talk. "I don't do that often. I didn't do much. I wanted to make sure he knew, 'I'm the baddest boy here.' "

Heim is a part-time driver who has agreed to race full-time for 23XI Racing in 2027. The Brickyard 400 is his second win in six races after winning at the Coronado Street Course in San Diego on June 21. Another win, especially in the Brickyard 400 – the lone crown jewel race that Hamlin hasn't won – has made the 24-year-old a rising star ahead of his first full Cup season.

Heim has two wins in 15 Cup starts, and he's now the second youngest winner of the Brickyard 400 behind Jeff Gordon, who won the inaugural race as a 23-year-old in 1994. While Heim should have plenty of Brickyard 400 opportunities ahead of him, he didn't want to waste this one.

"I know that you're not gonna be the best car every year, so I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity and execute where our cars were really fast," Heim said. "The fact that we were able to do it twice this year in seven or eight starts is definitely a crazy feeling and something I didn't expect coming into the year by any means."

23XI Racing, which won this race last year with Bubba Wallace, has sensed Heim's potential since signing him as a reserve driver in 2024 and development driver in 2025. With a 12-race schedule this year that has four races to go, Heim is proving that he's more than ready to compete with the best stock car drivers in the world.

"I think everybody thinks I'm always joking, but I mean, he's more talented than everybody else," Barker said. "That's almost a bit of a disservice to some of the great drivers … but Corey's there in talent. Corey's also there in work ethic, and he's there as far as mentality. So he has all of that now. But now that's no guarantee going forward, but right now, he has it."

Barker knew that Heim would have to pinch Hamlin in along the inside line to complete the pass on the restart. The 23XI crew trusted Hamlin to not cause an accident while acknowledging that Hamlin, who is 45 and plans to retire after 2027, desperately wanted to win at IMS for the first time.

"I don't think he's ever won a Brickyard, so he ain't gonna give us nothing," Barker said. "But I don't expect it either. But I do expect from him to be fair, and he was."

Earlier in the race, Heim was involved in an encounter with fan favorite and fellow rising star Carson Hocevar, who Heim has had incidents with in the Cup Series and the Craftsman Truck Series. Hocevar was trying to get unlapped by passing Heim, who wouldn't let Hocevar's No. 77 Spire Motorsports Chevrolet get by him.

Once Heim pitted, Hocevar flashed his middle finger at him. Heim has no remorse.

"I was just trying to hold my position, and I never threw a back block," said Heim, who won the Craftsman Truck Series championship last year. "I was just trying to protect my entry (into pit lane), and he didn't like it. But he lost; I won. So I don't really care."

As a part-time driver who had never raced on the IMS oval before this weekend, not many had Heim on their radar to win at the Racing Capital of the World. But Heim did so despite Christopher Bell being within a second of him for most of the final stint, which Heim called "a grind" and said wasn't comparable to his 10.365-second win in San Diego. (Heim got to the bricks 0.287 seconds before Bell on Sunday.)

Going into 2027, Heim will be expected to win more races, compete for more crown jewel victories and be one of the 16 Cup drivers who make the Chase – NASCAR's 10-race playoff. In the meantime, he'll do what it takes to not let the hype consume him.

"I feel like I'm pretty good at just kind of focusing on myself and focusing on the task at hand," Heim said, "and not getting too caught up in what other people say or think, and just making sure that I do my job and execute as I should."

Sunday's execution from Heim was at the level of an experienced Cup driver, not someone who was racing on this particular superspeedway for the first time. Heim further announced himself to the NASCAR world by winning at the Brickyard 400.

Gilliland outlasts Blaney for $1M NASCAR prize

Zion Brown
The Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY Network

INDIANAPOLIS – Todd Gilliland has won $1 million in NASCAR's In-Season Challenge after finishing higher than Ryan Blaney in the Brickyard 400. Gilliland finished 24th, Blaney finished 26th.

Gilliland

Blaney qualified 23 spots higher than Gilliland and was comfortably ahead of him for most of the race, but contact with John Hunter Nemechek on a lap 120 restart spun Blaney into the wall between Turns 3 and 4. After the crash, Blaney's No. 12 Team Penske Ford suffered splitter damage that required a lengthy pit stop for repair. Blaney rejoined the field in 31st, which was second-last of cars running at the time.

"What a dumb (expletive) that 42 (Nemechek) is," Blaney said on his radio. "Every week."

Gilliland has captured the second In-Season Challenge championship in what was truly an underdog run. He entered the tournament 25th of the 32 drivers who qualified for the In-Season Challenge. He then finished higher than Daniel Suarez (No. 8 seed), Carson Hocevar (No. 9), Alex Bowman (No. 32) and Chase Elliott (No. 4) to make it to the final round at the Brickyard 400. Gilliland beat out Blaney, who was the No. 3 seed and won at Atlanta Motor Speedway in the quarterfinal round, for the championship.

"It was nerve wracking," Gilliland said of holding off Blaney on July 26. "Seems like we barely squeezed by every round but we did what we need to do. This is something to celebrate.

"We'll figure out something to do with $1 million bucks."

Gilliland never finished better than eighth en route to the championship.

There was no horseplay filming inside Trojan Horse

Actor Jon Bernthal talks about the "insane" siege of Troy in "The Odyssey." **Page 2D**

Woman who was framed tells her side of 'Toxic Love Story'

On Netflix, Michelle Hadley talks about serving time for a crime she didn't commit. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE

FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

THEY SAID WHAT?
THE STARS' BEST QUOTES

"I think the hardest thing about grief is that people, they move on. But for us, because we're his wife and child, there's no moving on. There's moving with and living with. He will always be a part of our everyday," Tenisha Warner, Malcolm-Jamal Warner's widow, opened up in an emotional interview on "CBS Mornings." Speaking with Gayle King to mark the one-year anniversary of the "Cosby Show" actor's death at 54, she called his passing "unfair." The Emmy nominee died from an accidental drowning in Costa Rica.

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Berkley

Cartoonist **Jim Davis** turns 81. Actor-activist **Sally Struthers**, 79. Musician **Gerald Casale** (Devo), 78. News anchor **Scott Pelley**, 69. Actor **Lori Loughlin**, 62. Singer **Priscilla Chan**, 61. Actor **Elizabeth Berkley**, 54. Rapper **Afroman**, 52. Singer **Jacoby Shaddix** (Papa Roach), 50. Actor **John David Washington**, 42. Rapper **Soulja Boy**, 36.
– USA TODAY Network

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Aries (March 21-April 19). Are you getting in your way? The care and precision you desire may be disrupted by restless mental energy.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You may feel torn between what feels good and what's responsible. Is it time to get your priorities straight?

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Are you the one rocking the boat? Pursuing personal desires can disturb the peace at home.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You think you're saying the right thing, but it may come out the wrong way today. Communications getting complicated?

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Are you doing it for yourself? Or for the approval of others? Check your motivations.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The outside world may seem extra pushy today. Are external demands harshing your vibe? Prepare for a little friction.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Feeling restless and scattered? Venus confronting Mars today can frazzle your energy when all you want is peace.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Finding it hard to be social? Underlying emotional tension may get in the way of connecting freely with others.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Professional relationships may get heated today! Watch what you say while Venus squares off with Mars. Remember what's at stake.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You have the vision you desire. But are you struggling with follow-through? Tighten up your game.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Finding it hard to voice what you want? Intimacy can feel strained.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). A relationship may encroach on your personal comfort zone today. Will you pull them in or push them away?

CELEBRITIES

Michael J. Fox attends the third annual Social Impact Summit, hosted by The Hollywood Reporter and the Social Impact Fund, at the DGA Theatre in Los Angeles on July 22. MONICA SCHIPPER/GETTY IMAGES

Fox still is bringing the fight to Parkinson's

KiMi Robinson USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – When a 29-year-old Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease just as his acting career was in full swing, suddenly everything else seemed "silly." • It had been a little more than a decade since he'd arrived in Hollywood at 17, and Fox made the decision to shift his focus from acing auditions to recognizing he had "a unique opportunity to make a difference and do something bigger than just telling a joke." • "You think about a 19-year-old, 17-year-old kid, you want to be rich and famous and change the world, and you want to be the big 'it' thing," the 65-year-old tells USA TODAY. "And when you start to search for a cure for a disease, that stuff is just so silly."

"The point where it got boring and tedious turned into a lever to operate a much bigger machine," he adds.

On July 22, the actor's Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research was one of three honorees at The Hollywood Reporter's and Social Impact Fund's third annual Social Impact Summit, alongside John Mayer's Heart and Armor Foundation for Veterans Health and Stephen and Ayesha Curry's Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation.

See FOX, Page 2D

Fox plays a pivotal role in Paul's (Harrison Ford) Parkinson's journey in "Shrinking." PROVIDED BY ROBERT VOETS/APPLE TV

MUSIC

Carly Simon reveals her Parkinson's diagnosis

Edward Segarra
USA TODAY

Carly Simon has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, the has singer revealed.

Simon, the beloved pop rocker known for '70s hits including "You're So Vain," "Nobody Does It Better" and "Mockingbird," made the health revelation in a statement to USA TODAY Monday, July 27. People magazine was the first to report the news.

"So many people have written to me, kindly wondering about my relative silence, asking how I am and what I have been doing. The truth is, I've been learning how to live with Parkinson's disease," Simon, 83, told the outlet. "It has taken me some time to understand the diagnosis, to adjust to it and to decide how much I wanted to say about it publicly."

Carly Simon attends the Pre-Grammys Gala and Salute to Industry Icons in Beverly Hills, California, on Feb. 14, 2016.
LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES

Parkinson's disease is a degenerative syndrome that results in the slow loss of brain circuitry involved in movement, cognition and behavior. It can cause tremors, stiffness, slowness and falls in addition to anxiety, depression and sleep dysfunction.

"Parkinson's is different for everyone, and it can be unpredictable," said Simon, whose battle with the disease began with arthritis in the knees and one of her hips. "Some days I'm so tired I can't get the day moving at all. On others, it gives me a little more room to move, think, work and feel like myself."

Simon said she had three replacement surgeries to treat her damaged joints, but her mobility "continued to worsen."

"I had trouble standing up from low chairs and deep couches without someone offering me an arm," Simon said. "Overstuffed furniture became my enemy. Once seated, I could feel as though I had been swallowed by the chair and might remain there permanently, like a guest who had badly overstayed her welcome."

Parkinson's is incurable, according to the Mayo Clinic. But various medicines and treatments can help manage symptoms.

"There is no tidy or predictable schedule to the illness," Simon said. "It does not consult my calendar before deciding what kind of day I am going to have."

The singer also shared that she had surgery for basal cell carcinoma amid her Parkinson's diagnosis and treatment. Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

"During this same period, I was also treated for basal cell carcinoma on my face," she said. "The cancer was removed, but the surgery affected my appearance and made me more self-conscious about being seen in public. I have always been more critical of my appearance than anyone else could possibly imagine."

In addition to her physical symptoms, the Grammy-winning singer also was candid on the mental toll of living with Parkinson's, which she said can include "anxiety, depression, exhaustion and apathy."

"The apathy is particularly strange,"

See SIMON, Page 2D

MOVIES

Reality, fiction collide inside Trojan Horse

Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

The towering Trojan Horse leads to brutal carnage in Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey." PROVIDED BY MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

NEW YORK – Imagine you're crammed inside a 40-foot-tall wooden horse with 20 other guys on a beach.

That may sound like the antithesis of Hollywood glamour. But in the words of Jon Bernthal, "it was glorious."

The Marvel actor costars with Matt Damon and Tom Holland in "The Odyssey" (in theaters), Christopher Nolan's big-budget retelling of Homer's epic poem. In a nerve-jangling early scene, Ithacan king Odysseus (Damon) and Spartan ruler Menelaus (Bernthal) steel themselves inside a colossal Trojan Horse along with more than a dozen other soldiers, as part of an intricate plot to hide and launch a surprise attack on Troy.

Mistaking the horse for a gift, Trojan officers drag it inside the walls of their kingdom, only for Odysseus' men to jump out and rampage the city come nightfall. To film the sequence, the actors spent numerous hours inside the contraption alongside Nolan and cinematographer Hoyte Van Hoytema.

"I loved it," Bernthal says. "You better believe Chris was in there with us – there's no one working harder than him." Although the Trojan Horse was, in fact, fictional, "you got a real sense of how insane that [experience] would be: what it's like to be moved; what it's like to have it filling up with ice-cold water and having to be quiet; the looks of the folks I was in there with and their discomfort at times. I remember it well."

"The Odyssey" is a star-studded, globe-trotting saga that filmed in six countries – including Greece and Iceland – across a six-month period. The chance to work with Nolan for the first time was a "pinch-yourself moment" for Bernthal, 49, who met Nolan at the director's home not knowing the specifics of the project.

"I talked to a couple different people in the know who told me he was doing a remake of 'Blue Thunder,' that helicopter movie from the '80s," Bernthal recalls, laughing. "It was so shrouded in mystery and secrecy."

Menelaus, husband of Helen (Lupita Nyong'o), becomes a key resource for the young Telemachus (Holland) as he searches for answers about the fate of his missing father, Odysseus. Bernthal's biggest scenes are flashbacks to the Trojan War, as Menelaus and his army wreak bloody havoc on Troy that haunts Odysseus for many years after.

The siege of Troy was filmed over multiple nights with more than 2,000 extras. Bernthal commends the movie's stunt coordinators for the "meticulously well-rehearsed action sequences," with fighting that felt extremely visceral yet "completely safe" for the actors.

"It created this real sense of danger on set," Bernthal recalls. "It was genuinely scary, no acting necessary. Coming out of the horse and the battle that ensues in the Trojan War – it was complete and utter chaos. You felt it, but nobody got hurt. You have to have reckless abandonment and let it all go, but you also have to know exactly what you're doing. That marriage is when you get something really electric."

"The Bear" star similarly praises the film's leading man, Damon, with whom he previously worked on "Ford v Ferrari." The actors bonded as both dads and husbands, but also in their shared awe over what Nolan had created.

"I remember my first day in Morocco on that beach, with all those ships and thousands of background [actors], and you see the size and scope of the film immediately," Bernthal says.

"You don't see a ton of crew members running around – it's just all what's going to be on the screen. I ran into Matt and he was wide-eyed. And this is Matt Damon!

"I look into his eyes and he said, 'Holy (expletive), Bernthal, this is huge. I've never seen anything like it,' " Bernthal adds. "There was a childlike wonder that was palpable every single day."

Fox

Continued from Page 1D

Fox and his foundation's CEO, Deborah W. Brooks, spoke with USA TODAY backstage before his "Shrinking" costar Harrison Ford presented the two with the Philanthropic Organization of the Year award.

"These approbations are always humbling," Fox says. "It's great attention for our foundation; it's great attention for the progress that's been made."

His latest accolade, which arrives on the heels of his 19th Emmy nomination, comes courtesy of the Social Impact Fund, a nonprofit organization founded in 2013 that "helps overcome common administrative barriers" for philanthropic endeavors in the entertainment industry and beyond by providing a "legal structure" for organizations, including those whose tax-exempt status is pending. The organization has administered more than $135 million in charitable funds across more than 80 fiscally sponsored projects, with current partners including John Legend, Kerry Washington, Ryan Reynolds and Alicia Keys.

Since 2000, Fox's foundation reportedly has funded $3 billion in Parkinson's research while also successfully advocating for resources at the federal level and helping advance breakthrough scientific discoveries, such as a "crucial" spinal fluid test for those exhibiting symptoms of the neurodegenerative disease. Ultimately, they are working toward a goal of eliminating the disease "in our lifetime."

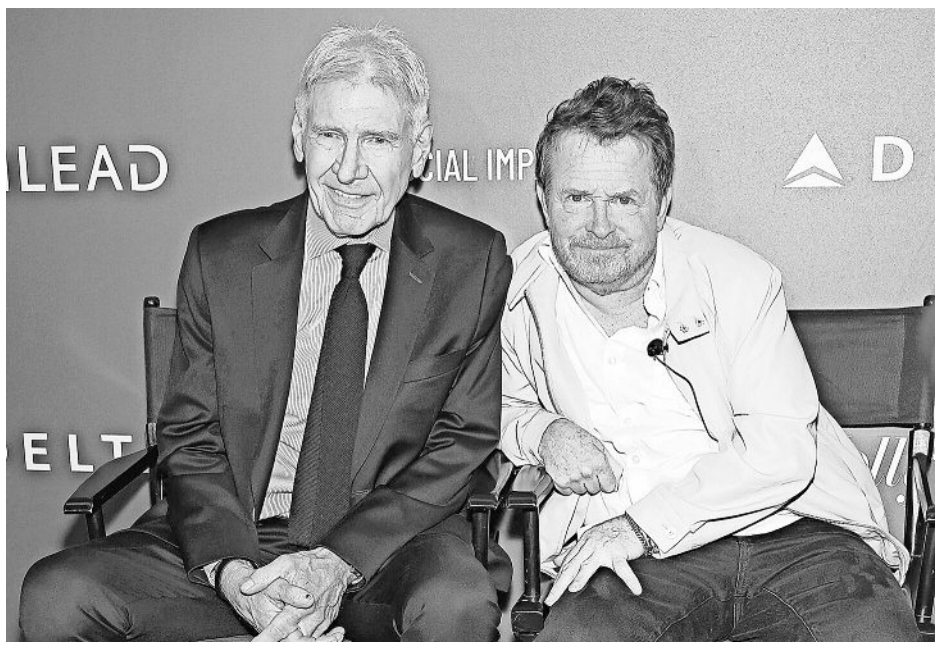
"What we're doing isn't happening at them or for them," Fox says of people with Parkinsonism symptoms. "It's happening with them."

Fox went from hiding Parkinson's to becoming 'part of the answer'

Fox wasn't always accepting of his diagnosis, discovered after he noticed a tremor in his pinky finger in 1991. It took some time to become, as Ford described his costar in his onstage speech, "the most stubborn optimist I know." But by the time he let the world in on his chronic condition, he'd had the revelation that "I want to be part of the answer."

The fastest-growing neurodegenerative condition in the United States, Parkinson's is an incurable brain disorder, a progressive disease "that causes unintended or uncontrollable movements, such as shaking, stiffness, and difficulty with balance and coordination," according to the National Institute on Aging.

"I was diagnosed, and I went into a hidden retreat and hid for seven years, didn't tell anyone about it. And then when it occurred to me that I might go public with it, I weighed that with my wife [Tracy Pollan] and myself, [had] a lot of conversations about it," Fox says. "And I realized it was a unique opportunity."



Harrison Ford and Michael J. Fox attend the third annual Social Impact Summit at the DGA Theatre in Los Angeles on July 22. MONICA SCHIPPER/GETTY IMAGES

"There is so much that has been accomplished," says Fox Foundation CEO Deborah W. Brooks. JOHN SCIULLI/THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER VIA GETTY IMAGES

> **"I would've been thrilled if you'd told me when I was 17 that I'd be well-known as a disease advocate for something I was diagnosed with."**
> **Michael J. Fox**

Less than a decade after receiving his diagnosis, the "Family Ties" actor came to embrace the role of being the face of Parkinson's.

"I would've been thrilled if you'd told me when I was 17 that I'd be well-known as a disease advocate for something I was diagnosed with," Fox says.

Brooks, the foundation's CEO, has been equally as proud of Fox's impact.

"I remember the first day of my job, he said, 'People may come here just because of me. It's your job to build something that brings them back,' " Brooks says. "Objectively, we have not cured Parkinson's. But there is so much that has been accomplished. … Today, it's a field transformed from where it was when we started, and that's not everything about us, but it has a lot to do with almost everything we do. That keeps us motivated."

Fox's expletive-laden motto for Parkinson's patients

Beyond finding a cure – "science is hard," Fox quips – he hopes to give "the patient community a say and a presence."

"They're scared to death," he says. "That's a freaky diagnosis that rocks your world."

The average Parkinson's patient is in their early to mid-60s, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. A "small percent" of those diagnosed have early onset Parkinson's, which begins before age 50. Symptoms of the progressive movement disorder typically include tremors, muscle stiffness, balance issues and slowed movement.

Parkinson's has taken a toll on the "Back to the Future" star over the decades. He developed – and recovered from – alcohol addiction while coping with his diagnosis in the early years. He has broken a number of bones. He is "in pain all the time," he said in his 2023 documentary, "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie."

When asked about representation of Parkinson's patients in Hollywood, Fox brings up Apple TV's "Shrinking," in which Ford's Paul Rhoades, a therapist diagnosed with Parkinson's in Season 1, gets the ensemble cast on board with the motto "(expletive) Parkinson's." (Fox, playing a patient named Gerry, eventually becomes part of Paul's journey.)

Echoing Paul's refrain, Fox says, "For a long time I've been saying '(expletive) vanity.' It's not about vanity. It's not about how you look. And that's the thing that helps patients move forward in their minds; they say, 'This is what it is.' "

Simon

Continued from Page 1D

Simon said. "You can find yourself lying there like a starfish drying in the sun, arms pointing in all directions, while nothing inside is telling you to get up, read, watch, write, sing, call someone or do much of anything at all. That has been one of the hardest things to explain. It is not simply sadness or laziness. It is as though the part of the brain that sends out invitations to participate in life has temporarily misplaced the guest list."

Simon opens up about navigating 'frightening' Parkinson's disease

Simon, who has maintained a low profile in recent years, said stepping back from the spotlight became a coping strategy amid her health struggles.

"Between my mobility issues, the Parkinson's diagnosis, the surgery and the emotional effects of it all, withdrawing from public view was the most palatable reaction," Simon said. "If a person is allowed to hibernate during both winter and summer, then I have become an all-season bear. But I have not stopped living, and I have not stopped working."

The prolific singer/songwriter turned to music, channeling the emotional turmoil of her recent experiences into her new album, "Comes in Waves," which is set for release Aug. 14.

"Music has always known when to arrive. It has rescued me more times [than] I can count," Simon said. "It is like a cat or dog that quietly appears beside you when it senses you are not quite yourself."

Simon said the musical project, her 24th studio effort, "gave me somewhere to go without having to leave the room," as well as "reminded me that illness can change your life without becoming the whole of your life."

"I do not consider Parkinson's a gift or a blessing. It is neither. It is difficult, frustrating and sometimes frightening.

"I am still learning how to live with it and how to accept it without feeling that I have surrendered something essential."

The pop icon said she wanted to share her diagnosis "because so many people have reached out with genuine concern. … I am touched by that concern, even when I have not known how to respond."

"I am still writing, singing, imagining, laughing, worrying, remembering and occasionally getting trapped in an overstuffed chair.

"These days I move more slowly, I lean on others more than I once did and I have learned to accept that every day will look a little different.

"But I am still very much here."

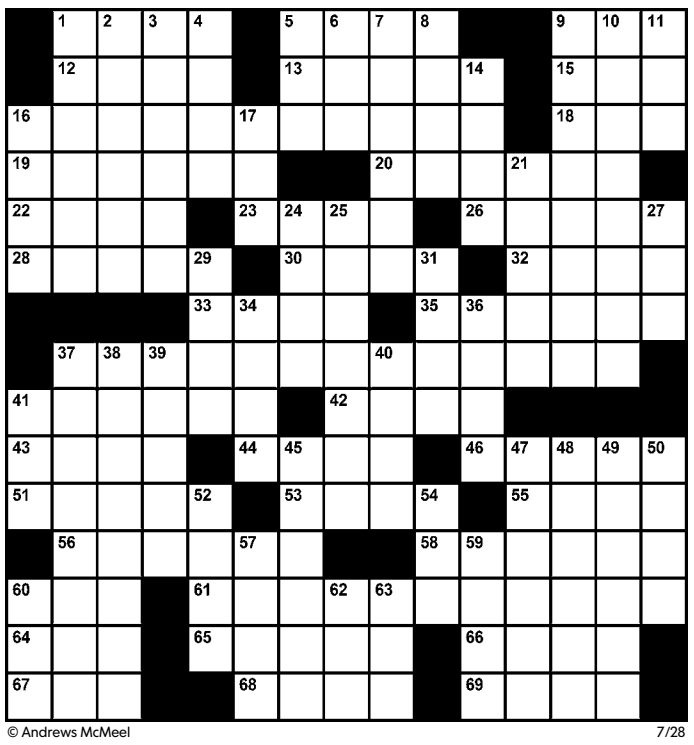
Contributing: Karen Weintraub and Anika Reed

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amanda Rafkin

BY Olivia Mitra Framke & Sally Hoelscher

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST



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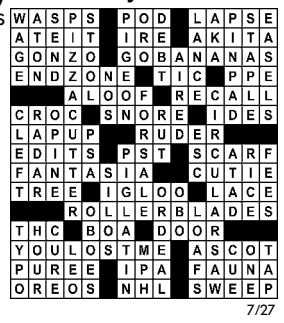
ACROSS

1 Discord admins
5 "Close to You" actor Elliot
9 _eats _er _inute
12 Fencing sword
13 Adored celebrities
15 "Pressure" singer Lennox
16 Bread soaked in an eggy mixture then grilled
18 White ___ (Chicago team)
19 Set on fire
20 Matching cups, saucers, pot, etc.
22 Caspian and Sargasso, for two
23 Horse's hair
26 ___ Alliance (Luke, Leia and others)
28 Attempted
30 Some deli loaves
32 Intense anger
33 Creative thought
35 Performed perfectly
37 Extra-thick breakfast item cooked in an iron
41 Champagne + orange juice
42 Darth Vader's garment
43 Recedes
44 Unexpected hitch
46 Intense anger
51 Adds to the payroll
53 Object in a shopping cart
55 Pixar title character who meets aliens
56 "Inception" actress Cotillard
58 All four of a square's are right
60 Alphabet beginning
61 Thick, creamy dairy product in some parfaits
64 Multihyphenate Issa
65 Throw with effort
66 "I triple-dog ___ you!"
67 Short albums, for short
68 Prophetic sign
69 Acorn, for one

DOWN

1 Corporate union
2 ChatGPT creator
3 "Stuart Fails to Save the Universe" character played by Lauren Lapkus
4 Religious offshoot
5 Peach discard
6 Hullabaloo
7 Chin beard
8 "What ___ can I say?"
9 "A League of Their Own" sport
10 Woman working with a mentor
11 Combine
14 One might be wished upon
16 Rock, in rock, paper, scissors
17 Clothing border
21 Sans ___ (font option)
24 Geometry calculation
25 Feline meme with a Pop-Tart body
27 Was ahead
29 Uses a shovel
31 Finger-click sound
34 "Buenos ___!"
36 Not many
37 Korean rice dish
38 Adopts enthusiastically
39 Last one across the finish line
40 Pay rate
41 Just so-so
45 Opening time for some stores
47 Jamaican music genre
48 Appeal
49 Having multiple levels
50 Entertain guests
52 Weary exhalation
54 Star Wars Day month
57 Sandwich cookie with many varieties
59 Silent assents
60 "We ___ Family" (Sister Sledge hit)
62 December 31, notably
63 Ncuti Gatwa's role in "Barbie"

Monday's Answer



7/27

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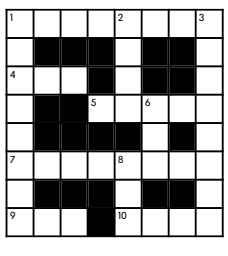
TXTPERT



7/28

Across
1. 34732867
4. 738
5. 78243
7. 62772867
9. 827
10. 8663

Down
1. 34784628
2. 2278
3. 73432773
6. 278
8. 228

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Today's theme
Performing arts

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

7/27

Yesterday's solution

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

				7	3		1	
8								6
	3		1	6			4	8
7				4			6	
		8		9		2		
	6			3				1
4	7			5	2		8	
5								9
	8		9	1				

7/28

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

3		2	5		
1	5	6	2		
			4	2	
	2	1			
		4	1	5	2
		5	6		4

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

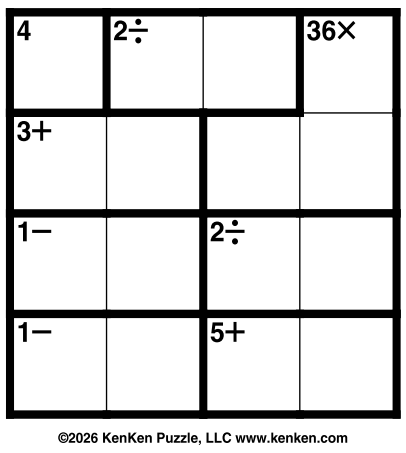
Monday's Answers

2	6	3	9	7	1	4	5	8
1	5	8	6	4	3	2	9	7
9	7	4	2	8	5	6	1	3
7	2	9	8	1	6	3	4	5
5	4	1	7	3	2	9	8	6
3	8	6	5	9	4	7	2	1
4	3	2	1	6	8	5	7	9
6	1	7	4	5	9	8	3	2
8	9	5	3	2	7	1	6	4

6	3	5	2	4	1
2	4	1	6	5	3
1	2	3	5	6	4
5	6	4	1	3	2
3	1	6	4	2	5
4	5	2	3	1	6

7/27

KENKEN



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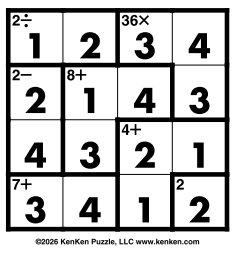
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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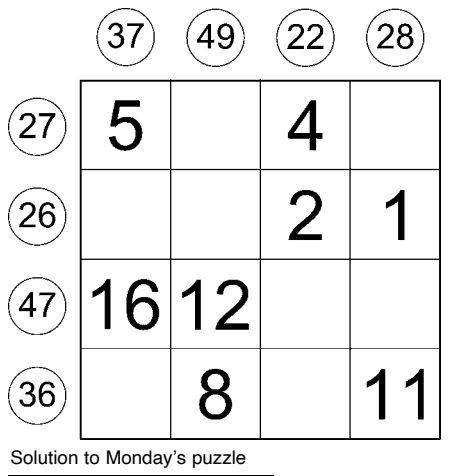
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **MEDIUM**



Solution to Monday's puzzle

1	14	13	2
11	12	8	10
9	3	15	16
5	4	6	7

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 7/28

Find and Circle:
Six car companies ☑☐☐☐☐☐
Three parts of the Earth ☐☐☐
John Grisham titles: "The ____" ☐☐☐
Three sports ☐☐☐
Six-letter root vegetable ☐

F	F	I	R	M	T	H	T	R	G	S	V	
Y	O	Z	E	S	S	N	E	A	I	P	O	
E	G	R	U	I	E	B	D	N	A	E	L	
K	O	R	D	I	M	Z	N	T	D	L	V	
C	C	A	L	A	A	E	O	G	N	T	O	
O	R	C	H	M	T	Y	N	L	O	N	D	
H	N	C	H	T	O	Z	H	Q	H	A	P	
F	I	A	T	T	R	U	G	B	Y	M	N	

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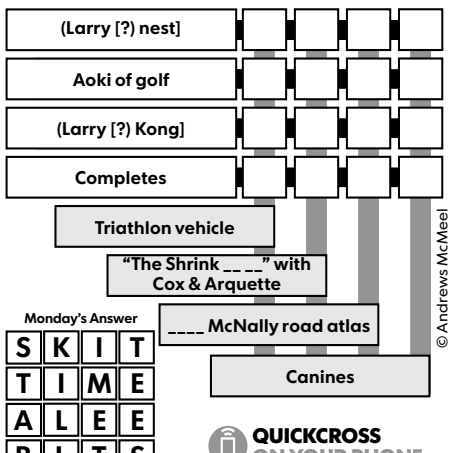
Monday's answer: CANYON GORGE KNOLL HILL MESA DELL DALE / MAROON PURPLE YELLOW INDIGO / MANITOBA ONTARIO ALBERTA QUEBEC / BEST / FOUR

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/28



© Andrews McMeel

Monday's Answer

S	K	I	T
T	I	M	E
A	L	E	E
B	L	T	S

7/27

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/28

1. **FOLSOM**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **AWAY**

Clues:
1. Johnny Cash concert site
2. Jailhouse escape
3. Enter illegally
4. Shared
5. Area of agreement
6. Burrowing rodent
7. Stash secretly

Monday's Answer

SEA	TURTLE
TURTLE	WAX
WAX	PAPER
PAPER	MOON
MOON	OVER
OVER	BUDGET
BUDGET	HOTEL

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

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©WIGGLES 3D GAMES

Cookbook author Julia Child talks about food.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
EAT FOOD ONLY STEAK WAITING WHILE

"THE ____ TIME TO ____ DIET ____ IS _____ YOU'RE _____ FOR THE _____ TO COOK."

7/28

Monday's Answer: "Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone." - Ella Wheeler Wilcox

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 trinkets (11)	_____
2 myths (7)	_____
3 sharpen (4)	_____
4 genius (5)	_____
5 Jordan's official language (6)	_____
6 moved like a baby (7)	_____
7 broke up like the Beatles (9)	_____

AWL	LE	KN	HO	KNA
CKS	IC	GEN	BRA	AB
DS	ED	IN	ICK	BAN
DIS	DED	CR	AR	NE

Monday's Answers: 1. HUSBANDS 2. STOMACH 3. SENTIMENTAL 4. OBSTRUCT 5. FINGERTIPS 6. BIRDSONGS 7. PERMAFROST 7/28

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

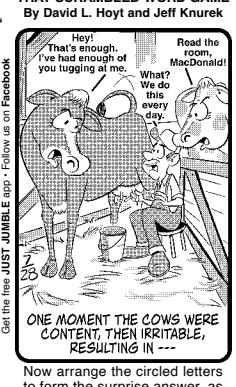
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

OIBNS

PWSTE

ADGAEM

NRUDGO


Hey! That's enough. I've had enough of you tugging at me.
What? We do this every day.
Read the room, MacDonald!
ONE MOMENT THE COWS WERE CONTENT, THEN IRRITABLE, RESULTING IN ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

"___-___" _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: MIGHT FOGGY SNEEZE WARMTH
Answer: The farmer talked to the hens and liked to — EGG THEM ON

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BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Defect
5 Go first
9 Dollar bills
13 Moon goddess
14 Personnel group
15 Toward the sheltered side
16 Composer — Stravinsky
17 Separately
18 Bellow
19 Wagging clock part
21 Attach
23 Canada's Mounties
24 Mud
25 Holiday song
28 Indicates
31 Island near Bonaire
32 Fashion
33 Corn on the —
35 Ascend
36 Lukewarm
37 Skid
38 Animal companion
39 Nevada's — 51
40 Tantalize
41 Power of combined efforts
44 Horse opera
45 Commedia dell'—
46 Grouch
48 Wraparound headgear
51 Followed in secret
55 Bedouin
56 Bar legally
58 Appraise
59 Macadamize
60 Goads
61 Ship of 1492
62 Plaything on runners
63 New Year's Eve word
64 — vital

DOWN

1 Overturn
2 Winter Olympics vehicle
3 Soon
4 "The Lion, the Witch and the —"
5 Take eagerly (2 wds.)
6 Cheese type
7 Timetable info
8 Arrested
9 Floor covering
10 — vera
11 Actor — Connery
12 Animal group
14 Tranquil
20 Sch. in the Golden State
22 For
24 TV, radio, etc.
25 Complain
26 Star sign
27 Out of practice
28 Dumb
29 Brilliance
30 Steep in brine
32 Combine
34 Bar order
36 Sour quality
37 Carried by water
40 Amphibian
42 Seized
43 Stat in baseball
46 Job
47 Knocks
48 Strikes gently
49 River in Russia
50 Rant and —
51 Surprise
52 Howl
53 Volcano on Sicily
54 Actor — Stockwell
57 Mole

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

T	A	U	T	■	C	A	W	E	D	■	A	S	P	S
A	L	L	A	■	A	G	A	V	E	■	R	O	L	E
I	O	N	S	■	D	O	V	E	R	■	T	R	A	P
L	E	A	T	H	E	R	Y	■	I	N	F	A	N	T
■	■	■	I	O	T	A	■	E	S	A	U	■	■	■
■	A	V	E	R	■	■	T	R	I	P	L	E	T	S
A	D	O	R	N	■	T	R	O	V	E	■	R	H	O
L	A	C	■	■	P	R	I	D	E	■	■	R	E	D
P	G	A	■	A	L	I	C	E	■	A	R	O	M	A
S	E	L	F	S	A	M	E	■	■	G	E	R	E	■
■	■	■	L	E	N	S	■	P	L	E	A	■	■	■
R	E	P	E	A	T	■	D	E	A	D	L	O	C	K
A	L	E	E	■	E	M	I	R	S	■	I	R	O	N
Z	I	N	C	■	R	I	N	S	E	■	Z	A	N	E
E	A	S	E	■	S	N	E	E	R	■	E	L	S	E

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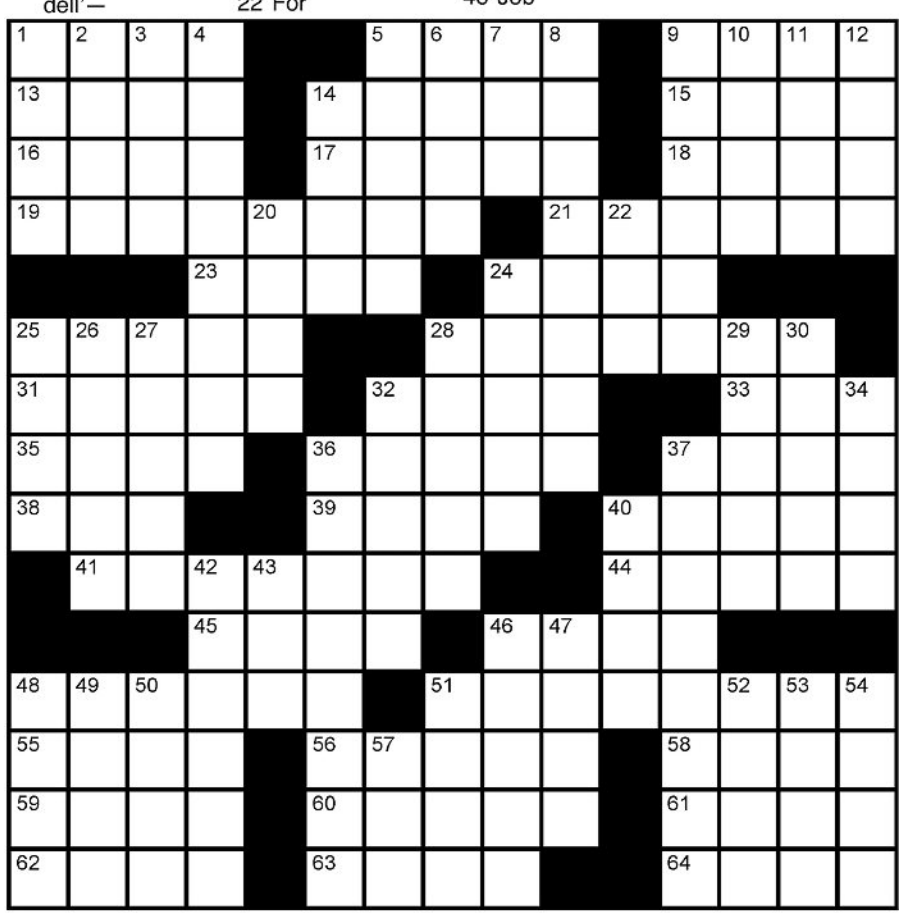


STREAMING

Framed woman tells her side of 'Toxic' story

Kalia Richardson
USA TODAY

Warning: this story contains spoilers from Netflix's new documentary, "A Toxic Love Story," streaming now.

While Michelle Hadley served 88 days in prison for a crime she did not commit, she kept her sanity by making calendars and welcome packets for other inmates – resources she says she wishes she had.

"I would just find ways to find purpose in a horrible situation," Hadley tells USA TODAY, noting that she also would trade coffee packets in exchange for artwork and aid her older cellmate who had difficulty hearing.

Hadley, 39, ended up behind bars in 2016 after being falsely accused of a crime involving her ex, former U.S. Marshal Ian Diaz, and his then-wife Angela Connell Diaz. The twisted tale is now at the center of Netflix's new documentary, "A Toxic Love Story" (streaming now).

Michelle Hadley was exonerated in January 2017, after being framed by her former boyfriend Ian Diaz and his wife at the time, Angela.

Angela and Ian in "A Toxic Love Story."
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

At the time, Ian and Angela claimed they were receiving death threats, cyberstalking messages and images of decapitated fetuses from a "Lilithistruth" user, believed to be Hadley. The newly married couple also claimed Hadley was posing as Angela on Craigslist and responding to "rape fantasy" ads to lure men to her home to sexually assault her.

The Anaheim Police Department eventually arrested and imprisoned Hadley – only to learn months later that Ian and Angela were in fact the ones who puppeteered the stalking and harassment scheme. Hadley then was exonerated in January 2017.

That month, Angela pleaded guilty to all charges, including fraud, false imprisonment and falsely reporting a crime. She later was sentenced to five years in state prison. By June 2023, Ian also was sentenced to 10 years and one month in prison for conspiracy to commit cyberstalking, cyberstalking, perjury, and obstruction of justice.

"It turns your whole world upside down, and it really did feel like being buried alive because it just felt like I was so powerless," Hadley says, recalling the time she spent in jail. "You don't have access to outside information. You're just so at the mercy of the system."

Hadley discusses the traumatic ordeal, the red flags she saw in Ian and what life has been like since clearing her name.

Question: Why did you want to be part of this documentary and revisit such a traumatic chapter in your life?

Answer: I never felt like I really had a chance to reclaim the narrative, and most importantly, to tell the story about the domestic abuse that I experienced in the relationship. This documentary was an opportunity for me to partner with a production company that was just as committed as I am to telling the story in a way that would uplift survivors of domestic abuse. That was very important to me. And it was the best telling of the story that's been done so far.

In your opinion, what percentage of this cyberstalking hoax was Ian's doing? How much do you think Angela played a part?

We don't really know what was going on behind closed doors. I do know that Ian was extremely controlling, extremely manipulative. I had no doubts from the moment that this whole thing started happening – even while I was in it – that he was the one driving the whole thing, that he was the mastermind. That was never a question for me. The real question is how much did he get Angela to participate? And I don't think any of us will ever know the answer to that question.

You mentioned some concerning behaviors in Ian while you were dating. What were those red flags you may have overlooked at the time?

I'm much older, much wiser, and there were a few things that I realized. One is how quickly the relationship progressed. This is something I tell everyone now when people ask me for my advice. I say, "Always slow down the early stages of dating because people like Ian thrive on speed because speed doesn't give you enough time to think and to assess and to evaluate and even check in with yourself." You'll hear it called colloquially as love bombing.

The other thing is you should really be evaluating if the person sitting across from you, especially if you're a woman dating a man, has a level of respect for the opposite sex. Pay really close attention to how they talk about women in general. In Ian's case, [it was evident] how he spoke about women, female friends, his mom … A lot of the time, these types of guys will speak in a derogatory way about the women in their lives, and will also objectify women.

That's interesting, considering one of the key voices in this doc is Leslie, a female friend of Ian's for 20 years. Did Ian speak in a derogatory way about her?

He would come back from the time he spent with Leslie and do nothing but say negative things about her. I never had any jealousy about their relationship because, for me, I was seeing the flip side of it, which I don't think she ever saw, to be honest. In retrospect, I look back, and I realized what a huge red flag that was. Because here's someone who was supposedly his closest friend, and yet he was turning around and saying negative things about her behind her back. And same with his mom; he would say negative things about her. A lot of it centered around appearance and looks.

Have you heard from Ian or Angela since everything unfolded?

No. And to be honest, I've reached a point in my healing journey where I'm not living for the apology.

After being exonerated, what was it like finding a job?

It was almost impossible to find work after what happened. Before, I had no trouble finding work at all, any time I needed to find work. And afterwards, I saw a noticeable difference. I actually ended up having to pick up and move all the way across the country. New York City was the place where I relaunched my career. I've been working in marketing and CRM, customer relationship management, for over 15 years now.

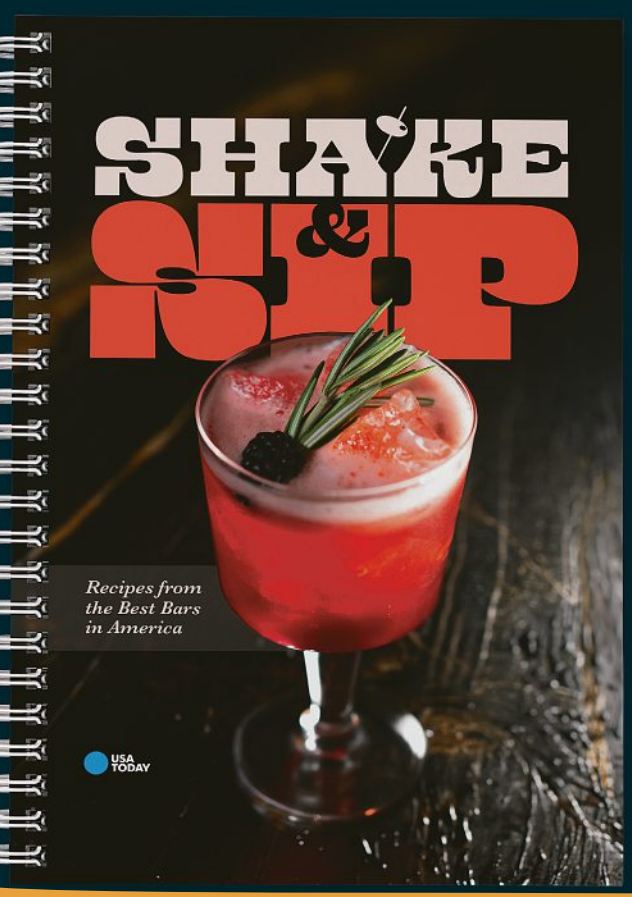
Have you been able to reenter the dating pool?

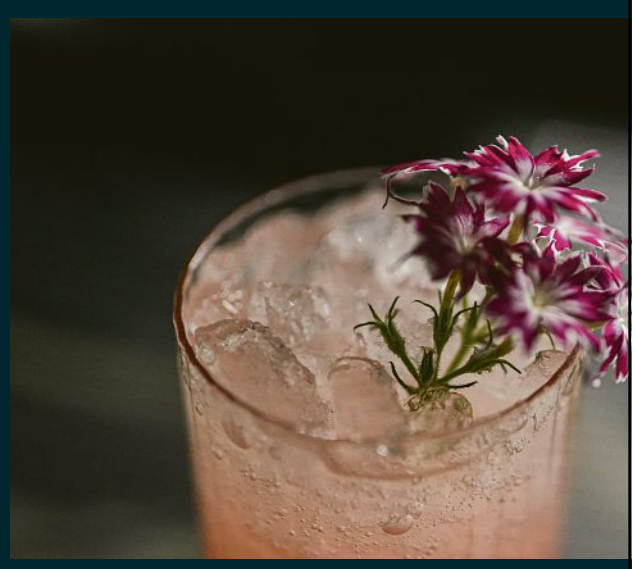
It's something I've had to be really on guard with [and] just be very careful who I let into my world because I've had some bad experiences. There are some people where it's just too much for them. They see that you've got all these articles about you, and they just don't want to deal with it for whatever reason. So it does make it a little more difficult. I have dated, but I'm still single.

You gave birth to your daughter the same day Ian was convicted in 2023. What has it been like raising her?

The biggest trip-up for a lot of women is that we're so trained to defer to or default to what men say. And it just makes you much more susceptible to abuse. So if I can teach her to just rely on her own instincts, trust what she sees, trust what she feels, be confident in herself, that's one of the most powerful things I can give her as her mom.

Legendary cocktails.
SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE.





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USA TODAY

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

WEST BANK VIOLENCE RAMPS UP

Palestinians say settler attacks, raids bring them to breaking point

Palestinian men stand atop a building in the village of Tal in the occupied West Bank on July 25. Palestinians in Tal buried four men on July 25, who were killed during a clash with Israeli settlers in the village the previous day, local officials said.
JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Pesha Magid
REUTERS

Palestinian villagers in the occupied West Bank said on July 27 the area was coming close to a breaking point after increasing incursions by Israeli settlers and violent stand-offs, such as one that left six people shot dead last week.

The Israeli military made dozens of arrests and blocked roadways through the West Bank after the July 24 incident in the village of Tal, southwest of Nablus, where four Palestinians and two Israelis were killed.

Early on July 27, most entrances to Tal, neighboring villages and Nablus were either partially or fully shuttered, creating long lines of residents seeking to pass the checkpoints.

The recent shootings occurred after villagers from Tal confronted a large group of armed settlers they said tried to enter houses in the village. The Israeli military said there was a "violent confrontation" between dozens of Palestinians and Israeli civilians in which shots were fired.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has characterized the incident as terrorism but Palestinians say villagers were defending themselves against the latest in a series of attacks by settlers seeking to drive them off the land.

Ahmed Ramadan, 71, the father of one of the Palestinians killed on July 24, said settlers have continually harassed their home on the edge of Tal overlooking the rolling hills of the West Bank.

A Palestinian man inspects the damage at a mosque, which Palestinians say was damaged by Israeli settlers, in Qusra near Nablus, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. MOHAMAD TOROKMAN/REUTERS

"They say we are terrorists. We are not terrorists," Ramadan said. He said the settler killed on July 24, Benayahu Mellet – an army reservist who was serving as security coordinator for the nearby settlement of Havat Gilad – had previously come to his home and yelled at him to leave and go to Syria or Jordan.

Ramadan said he had no intention of leaving, "Even if we die, we'll die here on our land. We're not prepared to leave this country."

Sitting at home with his surviving sons, he said if settlers return in force the village was ready. "If they come, we'll meet them head-on, even if they kill us," he told Reuters.

Israeli authorities initially portrayed the July 24 incident as an attack by Palestinians on hikers walking near the village, located in Area A of the West Bank, a zone under Palestinian control that Israelis are generally prohibited from entering.

Video widely circulated on social media showed settlers carrying rifles and pushing residents as they approached the village.

Palestinians from Tal said settlers

See WEST BANK, Page 4NN

Trump floats chance of deal

Iran has said it's not seeking to resume talks

Bo Erickson, Nayera Abdallah and Elwely Elwelly
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump said on July 27 that the United States was having "good talks" with Iran and there was a chance of a deal over their conflict, but he warned that U.S. strikes would resume if the negotiations failed to deliver.

Despite Trump's optimism, Tehran appeared to quickly test the pause in the U.S. military campaign, with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq reporting drone attacks on July 27.

Washington abruptly suspended a two-week campaign of air strikes on Iran on July 25 in Trump's latest strategic U-turn in the five-month-old conflict.

"We're having good talks," he said. "I think there's a good chance that something could happen, and if it does, good, if it doesn't, we go back to doing what we were doing two days ago."

At a campaign rally in Michigan later on July 27, Trump said of Iran: "You can't bribe them. You've got to beat them, and we'll beat the hell out of them. But we'll see how it turns out. Right now, there are very friendly negotiations going on."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said on July 27 that messages were still being passed between the sides through mediators and Iran had not forsaken diplomacy, but reports that it requested negotiations were "fabricated."

See IRAN, Page 4NN

Iran-backed Houthi rebels say they downed a Saudi drone over the northwest of Yemen. Iran appeared to quickly test the pause in the U.S. military campaign, with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq reporting drone attacks on July 27.
ANSARULLAH MEDIA CENTER/AFP HANDOUT VIA GETTY IMAGES

Supreme Court asked to allow ballot restrictions

DOJ wants to halt ruling blocking Trump order

Andrew Chung
REUTERS

President Donald Trump's administration asked the U.S. Supreme Court on July 27 to allow implementation nationwide of his executive order aimed at tightening rules for mail-in voting ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections that will decide control of Congress.

In a filing, the Justice Department requested that the justices put on hold a judge's ruling preventing the enforcement of the Republican president's directive in 23 mostly Democratic-governed states and Washington, DC, which had challenged the order as unconstitutional, while the litigation plays out.

The Supreme Court ordered those states to respond to the Justice Department's request by Aug. 3.

U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani rejected the administration's argument that the states lacked the necessary legal standing to challenge Trump's directive.

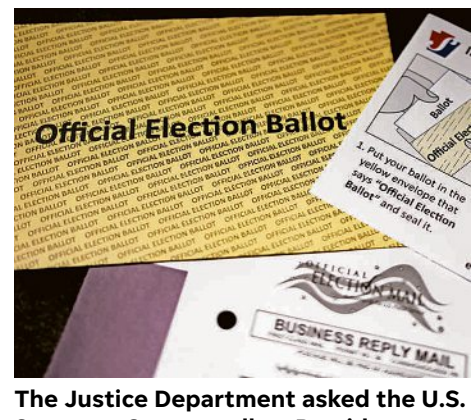
In June, Talwani ruled that the president lacked the authority to order changes in how states administer federal elections, noting that under the U.S. Constitution, states have the role of determining voter-eligibility requirements.

The administration said the justices should lift Talwani's ruling because the lawsuit is premature.

Federal agencies "are still deliberating over how (if at all) to implement the order, yet the district court preemptively decided that whatever the agencies may choose to do will necessarily be unlawful," the Justice Department said in its filing.

Trump's executive order, issued in March, is part of his wider efforts to make changes to elections. Trump, who has made false claims of widespread voting fraud including in his 2020 loss to Democrat Joe Biden, has pressed the Republican-controlled Congress to pass

See BALLOT, Page 4NN


Official Election Ballot
1. Put your ballot in the yellow envelope that says "Official Election Ballot" and seal it.
BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

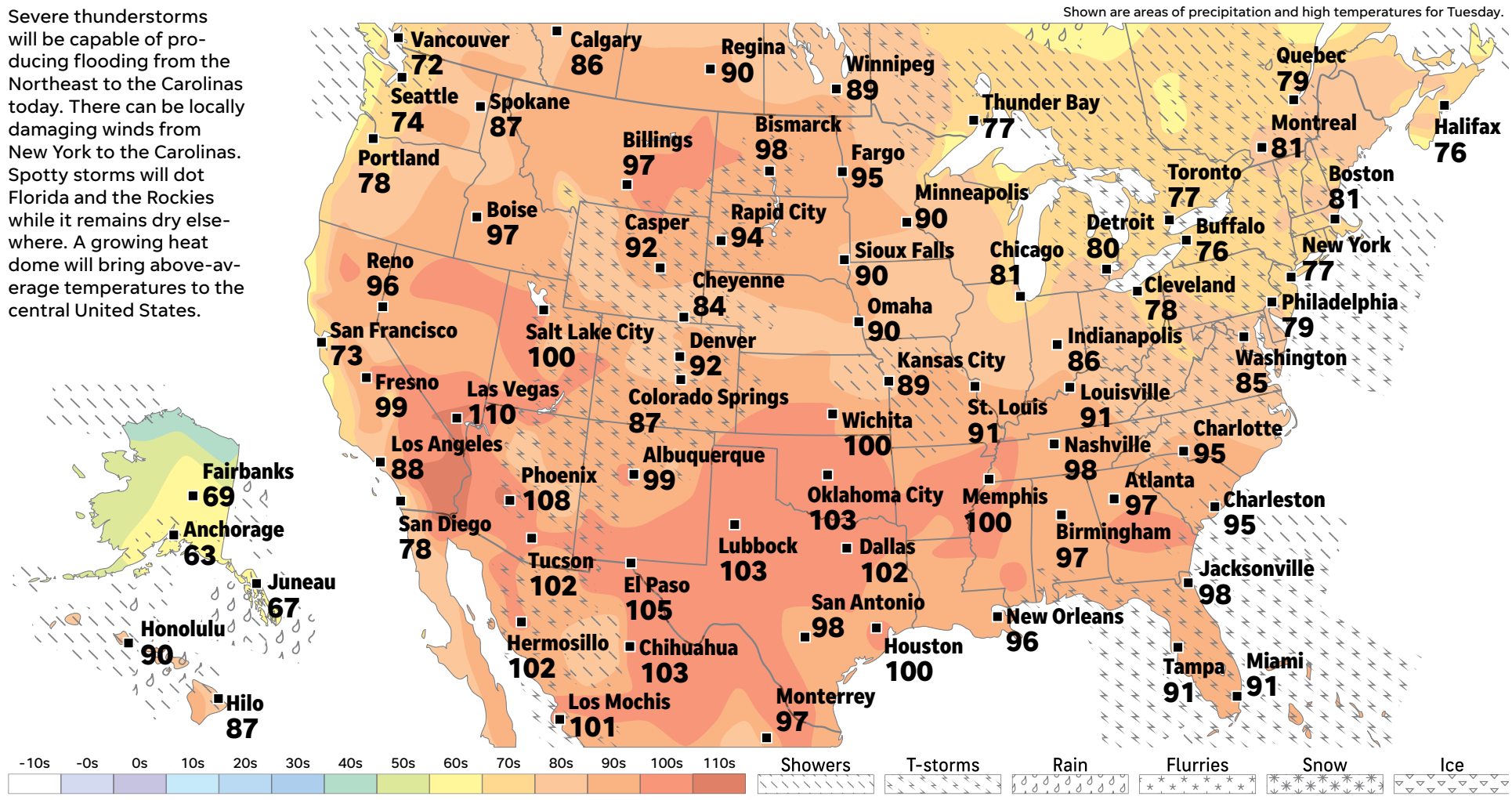
The Justice Department asked the U.S. Supreme Court to allow President Donald Trump's executive order aimed at tightening rules for mail-in voting to be enforced across the country.
HANNAH BEIER/ILLUSTRATION/REUTERS

NATIONAL SUMMARY

Severe thunderstorms will be capable of producing flooding from the Northeast to the Carolinas today. There can be locally damaging winds from New York to the Carolinas. Spotty storms will dot Florida and the Rockies while it remains dry elsewhere. A growing heat dome will bring above-average temperatures to the central United States.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Tuesday.



MONDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High:	**113** at Needles, CA
Low:	**32** at Truckee, CA
Precip:	**3.08"** at Effingham, IL

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High:	**122** at Hassi-Messaoud, Algeria
Low:	**12** at Balmaceda, Chile
Precip:	**5.12"** at Puri, India

TODAY IN HISTORY

A severe storm with hail of up to 1.5 inches in diameter occurred in Arizona on July 28, 1952. The hail shattered windows, damaged roofs and stripped leaves off trees near the town of Benson.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: What is the longest string of days above 120 degrees?

A: 43 at Death Valley, Calif.

NATIONAL CITIES TUESDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	92/68/s	37
Abilene, TX	101/75/s	36
● Accomac, VA	79/67/t	44
Adrian, MI	83/59/t	25
Akron, OH	78/64/t	25
Alamogordo, NM	106/75/s	49
● Alexandria, VA	81/70/t	56
Alliance, OH	79/60/t	25
Amarillo, TX	103/73/s	75
Ames, IA	87/66/s	75
● Anderson, SC	96/73/s	41
Appleton, WI	83/61/pc	75
● Asheville, NC	90/68/t	53
Ashland, OH	80/60/t	75
● Athens, GA	97/75/s	46
Augusta, GA	98/76/pc	42
Austin, TX	100/77/pc	75
● Bartlesville, OK	103/75/pc	70
Battle Creek, MI	82/57/s	25
Bedford, IN	86/60/s	40
● Binghamton, NY	70/63/t	44
Bluffton, SC	95/81/t	81
Bremerton, WA	72/52/sh	37
● Brockton, MA	81/66/sh	55
Brownwood, TX	100/72/s	36
Burlington, IA	86/65/s	32
● Burlington, NC	90/70/t	58
● Burlington, VT	83/69/t	55
Cambridge, OH	83/61/t	36
● Camdenton, MO	94/71/pc	39
● Canandaigua, NY	72/63/t	44
Canton, OH	80/61/t	25
Carlsbad, NM	106/75/s	79
● Chambersburg, PA	80/67/t	55
● Cherry Hill, NJ	78/68/t	60
Cincinnati, OH	84/65/t	50
Clarksville, TN	96/70/t	51
Coldwater, MI	82/57/s	25
Columbus, OH	83/63/t	50
● Corning, NY	73/63/t	31
Corpus Christi, TX	95/79/s	75
● Daytona Beach, FL	93/76/t	75
Deming, NM	103/73/t	55
DeRidder, LA	96/75/s	53
Des Moines, IA	87/70/s	75
Detroit, MI	80/61/t	25
Devils Lake, ND	92/68/pc	43
Dover, NH	79/63/t	55
El Paso, TX	105/80/pc	75
● Elmira, NY	75/65/t	29
Erie, PA	78/65/t	52
Eugene, OR	82/55/pc	25
Evansville, IN	91/63/s	75
Fall River, MA	79/68/sh	25
● Farmington, NM	99/70/t	50
● Fayetteville, NC	93/73/pc	58
Fond du Lac, WI	80/57/pc	75
Fort Myers, FL	90/79/t	75
Fort Smith, AR	104/81/pc	51
● Framingham, MA	80/66/sh	55
Freeport, IL	84/58/pc	75
● Fremont, OH	83/63/t	39
● Fort Collins, CO	91/64/t	75
Gadsden, AL	96/74/s	49
Gainesville, FL	96/78/t	75
Galesburg, IL	84/62/pc	75
● Gastonia, NC	94/70/t	58
Glen Rose, TX	102/75/s	43
Gonzales, LA	97/77/s	56
Great Falls, MT	94/57/s	144
Green Bay, WI	79/57/pc	75
● Greenville, SC	95/73/t	41
● Hackensack, NJ	78/67/t	58
● Hagerstown, MD	83/67/t	55
Hattiesburg, MS	100/77/s	33
Henderson, KY	92/63/s	75
● Hendersonville, NC	91/69/t	53
● Herkimer, NY	73/64/t	32
Hillsdale, MI	81/56/pc	25
Holland, MI	80/57/s	25
● Hornell, NY	74/61/t	34
Houma, LA	94/77/s	50
Howell, MI	80/57/t	25
● Hutchinson, KS	100/76/pc	45
Hyannis, MA	78/66/pc	25
Indianapolis, IN	86/62/s	25
Iowa City, IA	86/66/pc	38
● Ithaca, NY	72/62/t	44
Jackson, MS	100/76/s	37
Jackson, TN	98/74/s	56
Jacksonville, FL	98/78/sh	75
● Jacksonville, NC	90/75/t	58
Kent, OH	78/61/t	75
Kewanee, IL	83/60/pc	75
● Keyser, WV	84/64/t	53
● Kinston, NC	91/73/pc	58
Knoxville, TN	92/71/t	51
Lafayette, IN	83/57/s	34
Lafayette, LA	95/78/s	53
● Lakeland, FL	90/76/t	75
Lansing, MI	81/57/t	25
Las Cruces, NM	103/72/sh	47
● Lebanon, PA	76/66/t	58
● Leesburg, FL	92/78/t	75
● Levittown, PA	78/67/t	60
Lincoln, IL	86/59/s	75
Louisville, KY	91/66/pc	75
Lubbock, TX	103/73/s	75
Manitowoc, WI	76/58/pc	25
Mansfield, OH	78/61/t	75
● Marshall, NC	85/68/t	53
Marshfield, WI	82/59/pc	75
Massillon, OH	81/61/t	25
● McLean, VA	80/68/t	56
● Melbourne, FL	92/76/t	75
Memphis, TN	100/79/s	90
● Middletown, NY	74/63/t	45
● Milford, MA	79/65/sh	55
Milwaukee, WI	77/64/pc	75
Monroe, MI	83/61/t	25
Monroe, LA	100/78/s	53
Montgomery, AL	99/76/s	48
Muncie, IN	83/59/s	52
Murfreesboro, TN	97/71/t	52
Naples, FL	90/81/t	75
Nashville, TN	98/73/t	52
● Neptune, NJ	78/68/t	55
New Bedford, MA	79/68/sh	25
● New Bern, NC	89/74/t	58
New Philadelphia, OH	81/60/t	25
Newark, OH	83/59/t	50
● Newton, NJ	72/62/t	60
● New York, NY	77/69/t	58
● Norwich, CT	78/67/sh	44
● Ocala, FL	95/79/t	75
Oklahoma City, OK	103/76/s	70
Opelousas, LA	95/76/s	53
Oshkosh, WI	80/59/pc	75
Palm Beach, FL	90/79/t	75
Palm Springs, CA	111/87/s	90
Panama City, FL	92/83/t	75
Pekin, IL	86/61/s	75
Pensacola, FL	97/80/t	75
Peoria, IL	85/61/s	75
● Petersburg, VA	83/68/t	56
Phoenix, AZ	108/91/t	97
Port Huron, MI	76/60/t	32
Portsmouth, NH	79/66/t	55
● Poughkeepsie, NY	77/66/t	45
Providence, RI	80/68/sh	50
● Pueblo, CO	98/66/t	75
● Rochester, NY	75/65/t	30
Rockford, IL	85/59/pc	75
Ruidoso, NM	92/62/s	56
Salem, OR	79/56/pc	25
● Salina, KS	94/75/pc	38
Salinas, CA	71/58/s	25
● Salisbury, MD	82/69/t	53
San Angelo, TX	100/73/pc	35
Sarasota, FL	89/81/t	75
Savannah, GA	101/80/sh	88
Sheboygan, WI	76/59/pc	25
● Shelby, NC	94/70/t	58
Sherman, TX	101/79/s	52
Shreveport, LA	100/77/s	56
● Silver City, NM	95/68/t	51
Sioux Falls, SD	90/70/pc	68
Somerset, PA	75/60/t	54
● Somerville, NJ	76/64/t	60
South Bend, IN	78/58/s	25
● Spartanburg, SC	93/73/t	41
Springfield, IL	86/61/s	75
● Springfield, MO	97/76/pc	57
St. Augustine, FL	92/78/t	75
St. Cloud, MN	90/68/pc	81
● St. George, UT	105/81/pc	25
● Staunton, VA	85/62/t	34
Stevens Point, WI	84/58/pc	75
Stockton, CA	96/59/s	39
● Stroudsburg, PA	73/63/t	60
Stuart, FL	90/77/t	75
Sturgis, MI	82/57/sh	25
Tallahassee, FL	96/78/t	75
Thibodaux, LA	95/76/s	50
● Topeka, KS	90/73/pc	42
Tuscaloosa, AL	100/77/s	59
● Utica, NY	71/64/t	30
Ventura, CA	74/60/s	54
Victorville, CA	102/65/s	97
● Vineland, NJ	78/66/t	55
Visalia, CA	99/63/s	87
● Washington, DC	85/70/t	56
Watertown, SD	90/70/pc	39
Wausau, WI	84/60/pc	75
● Waynesboro, PA	80/67/t	55
● White Plains, NY	77/68/t	56
Wichita Falls, TX	104/76/s	60
● Wilmington, DE	80/69/t	53
● Wilmington, NC	92/76/t	58
Wisconsin Rapids, WI	85/60/pc	75
Wooster, OH	79/62/t	75
● Worcester, MA	77/64/sh	55
● York, PA	79/67/t	58

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Tuesday High/low/W	Wednesday High/low/W
● Acapulco	91/76/sh	93/77/pc
Addis Ababa	72/55/sh	72/55/r
Algiers	91/68/s	91/68/s
Amman	91/70/s	94/72/s
Amsterdam	80/64/pc	89/69/s
Ankara	89/62/s	85/57/s
Asuncion	91/67/t	87/67/t
Athens	97/80/s	95/78/s
Auckland	55/37/s	58/44/pc
Baghdad	112/90/s	115/91/s
● Bangkok	92/80/r	90/80/r
Beijing	95/77/pc	95/80/t
Beirut	89/76/s	88/78/s
Belgrade	87/62/s	94/65/s
Berlin	76/57/sh	86/63/s
Bogota	69/49/r	66/51/sh
Brussels	86/63/s	95/67/s
Bucharest	87/62/s	89/63/s
Budapest	87/62/s	92/66/s
● Buenos Aires	60/51/c	57/51/s
Cairo	97/77/pc	101/78/pc
Cape Town	67/44/s	69/42/s
Caracas	91/77/sh	91/77/r
Casablanca	91/68/s	88/70/pc
● Colombo	88/80/r	88/79/r
Copenhagen	71/61/pc	76/65/pc
Damascus	100/69/s	103/69/s
Dublin	77/60/c	70/51/sh
Geneva	90/65/s	96/63/s
● Guatemala City	79/62/t	80/63/t
● Hanoi	87/79/t	89/79/t
Harare	73/44/s	74/43/pc
Havana	89/73/r	92/72/r
Helsinki	67/57/sh	70/58/sh
Hong Kong	87/80/t	85/80/sh
Jakarta	91/76/pc	91/77/pc
Jerusalem	86/68/s	88/70/s
Johannesburg	67/40/s	63/42/pc
Kabul	92/67/pc	93/68/pc
Khartoum	99/80/t	102/81/t
Kyiv	72/55/pc	74/57/pc
Kingston	92/81/pc	93/83/s
La Paz	61/27/s	62/28/s
● Lagos	83/76/r	82/77/r
Lima	76/69/pc	76/68/s
Lisbon	92/66/s	86/64/s
London	86/61/pc	92/63/s
Madrid	102/69/s	103/70/s
● Manila	93/78/r	91/78/t
● Mexico City	75/56/r	76/56/r
Milan	95/75/s	99/76/s
Mombasa	84/70/r	85/69/sh
Montevideo	60/48/c	57/42/pc
● Montreal	81/67/t	73/65/t
Moscow	82/58/t	62/58/sh
Nairobi	73/57/c	75/57/c
New Delhi	91/81/r	92/81/r
Panama City	90/75/r	94/76/r
Paris	89/65/s	98/68/s
Port-au-Prince	98/76/s	100/75/pc
Rio de Janeiro	81/71/pc	87/71/s
Riyadh	107/86/c	109/85/pc
Rome	92/73/s	94/72/s
San Jose	82/70/r	86/72/r
● San Salvador	89/68/r	89/68/r
Santiago	56/45/r	61/44/c
Sao Paulo	83/63/pc	85/60/s
Sarajevo	87/57/s	92/60/s
Shanghai	93/83/pc	98/82/pc
Singapore	90/81/t	90/79/sh
Stockholm	71/51/s	73/58/s
Sydney	71/52/s	66/44/s
Taipei	95/78/c	97/80/sh
● Tegucigalpa	88/66/t	85/67/t
Tehran	100/77/s	98/76/s
● Tokyo	87/76/t	92/78/sh
● Toronto	77/64/t	76/61/sh
Tunis	94/75/s	93/76/s
Vancouver	72/57/sh	71/54/pc
Vienna	87/59/s	93/69/s
Warsaw	71/52/pc	78/58/pc
Yerevan	93/67/s	91/65/s
Zagreb	88/62/s	94/64/s
Zurich	88/59/s	96/61/s

● Denotes possible travel delays Tuesday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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Pentagon says U.S. drone industry years from matching Ukraine's output

$1.1B program will have ordered about 200K drones by February

Mike Stone
REUTERS

Ukrainian company F-Drones has partnered with Ohio-based Ukrainian Defense Drones, which opened a facility near Toledo, while Ukrainian drone maker General Cherry has agreed to a joint venture with New Hampshire's Wilcox Industries, according to the companies.
VALENTYN OGIRENKO/REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Pentagon official tasked with building a domestic drone industry said on July 27 that the United States is still in the earliest, hardest phase of that effort, acknowledging output remains a fraction of Ukraine's production even as the government tightens rules requiring drones be built with American-made parts.

Travis Metz, deputy director and chief operating officer of the Defense Innovation Unit who has run the Pentagon's Drone Dominance Program since last fall, said in an interview that Ukraine will produce between 6 million and 7 million small first-person-view attack drones this year, or roughly 500,000 a month. By comparison, the Pentagon's $1.1 billion program will have ordered just under 200,000 drones cumulatively by February.

"It's much harder to get from zero to 200,000" than it will be to scale up further once a domestic capacity to build many more drones exists, Metz said.

But the Pentagon just made a big surge in drone building much tougher when it instituted rules that military drones must be made with U.S. parts. A revised supply chain framework released July 23 adds language stating the government's ultimate goal is "a wholly domestic" small unmanned aircraft system supply chain. Metz acknowledged that harder-to-source components, including semiconductors, remains a far bigger problem for the U.S. outside the drone effort.

None of the drones from the 19 companies competing in an August test event may contain banned parts like Chinese-made brushless motors or battery packs, Metz said, a stricter standard than the program's first phase.

"It's an increasingly difficult thing," he said, estimating that "the vast majority" of drones purchased in an earlier phase likely contained Chinese motors.

Still, he said he expects the United States to eventually rival Ukraine's drone industry. "I see no reason why we shouldn't ... be the world champions of this as well," he said.

Metz said all six Ukrainian companies invited to August's "Gauntlet II" test at Fort Carson, Colorado, have entered or are moving toward joint ventures with U.S. manufacturers as a condition of future orders.

Ukrainian company F-Drones has partnered with Ohio-based Ukrainian Defense Drones, which opened a facility near Toledo, while Ukrainian drone maker General Cherry has agreed to a joint venture with New Hampshire's Wilcox Industries, according to the companies.

Metz said the Ukrainian companies competing in Gauntlet II are being required to localize production in the United States as a condition of winning future orders, a structure designed to convert Ukraine's battlefield expertise into American manufacturing capacity rather than reliance on imports.

Meta disregarded its own research on teen harm, Tennessee tells jury

Diana Novak Jones
REUTERS

Prosecutors say Meta Platforms' leadership disregarded internal research about its Instagram platform's impact on teenagers.
DADO RUVIC/ILLUSTRATION/REUTERS

Attorneys for the state of Tennessee told a jury in Nashville on July 27 that Meta Platforms' leadership disregarded internal research about its Instagram platform's impact on teenagers as the company sought to maximize profit from young users.

During opening statements in a seven-week trial in state court in Tennessee, the state's lawyers said Meta researchers repeatedly flagged that some teenagers were compulsively using the platform, leading to eating disorders, depression and self-harm.

But despite those warnings, Meta did not disable features such as autoplay, notifications and infinite scroll that, the lawyers said, were designed to keep teens on Instagram as long as possible and increase the number of ads they viewed.

An attorney for Meta countered that the company has been transparent about the risks teens face on Instagram and the amount of dangerous content that it finds. The company works hard to find problems and fix them, he said.

Power of the ping

The lawsuit, filed by Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti's office, seeks financial penalties and a court order directing Instagram to modify aspects of the platform that the state says are harmful to teens' mental health.

If the jury finds the company liable, the trial will enter a second phase before Chancellor Russell Perkins, the judge overseeing the trial, who will decide whether to order the company to pay financial penalties and make changes to Instagram to make it safer for teens.

During the opening statements, which Reuters watched on Courtroom View Network, Tom Cartmell, a lawyer for the state, played the familiar dinging sound of a notification hitting a smartphone. Unpredictable rewards like notifications trigger dopamine hits that promote addiction, which has a particularly strong impact on the brains of kids, Cartmell said.

Meta understood the brain science behind why teens find its platform so irresistible, Cartmell said.

Cartmell showed the jury an internal document from 2017 in which Meta product managers wrote that features like notifications and infinite scroll "are inherently at odds with well-being" and said that the company needed to warn the public.

"This warning never came," Cartmell said.

Kevin Huff, a lawyer for Meta, said documents like those Cartmell cited are proof that the company is searching for problems on its platforms, so it can improve them.

The company has developed tools to help limit problematic use of Instagram, and seeks to empower teachers and parents to help keep teens safe, Huff said.

Huff urged jurors to consider whether Meta should bear sole responsibility for societal problems such as suicide, child exploitation and addiction.

"We think the evidence will show that Meta is doing its part and empowering others to do their part, because protecting teens online is a shared responsibility. It takes a village."

Nearly every state in the country has filed claims against Meta over its platforms' alleged impact on children.

More than two dozen of the lawsuits have been consolidated in multidistrict litigation in San Francisco, while many other states have sued in their own courts. Separately, Meta and other social media companies are facing thousands of lawsuits brought by individuals and school districts. Tennessee's lawsuit is the second state case to reach a jury. Earlier this year, a jury in New Mexico found the company liable and ordered it to pay $375 million. A judge is weighing additional financial penalties as well as an order directing the company to change Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp in the state.

EPA: Power for data centers can sidestep pollution laws

Tim McLaughlin
REUTERS

Power sources providing electricity only to data centers and not the public grid may not be subject to federal pollution laws, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said on July 27.

The EPA said if the power plants are not supplying electricity to the grid then they would not be subject to the federal Clean Air Act's Acid Rain Program, which has been key to the dramatic reduction of smog and soot pollution from industrial facilities.

"The EPA believes that, considering the plain text of these definitions, the Acid Rain Program does not apply to power generation facilities that are not connected in any way to the larger electricity grid," EPA Assistant Administrator Aaron Szabo wrote in a July 16 letter.

The agency said its interpretation of federal pollution laws would speed the development of artificial intelligence infrastructure while reducing strain on regional electric grids.

The EPA said its guidance clarifies that the Acid Rain Program does not apply to so-called "islanded" power generation facilities that operate separately from the broader grid. The agency said the interpretation would give developers greater flexibility in where and how quickly they can build new data centers, which are driving a surge in electricity demand across the United States.

The agency said its action supports President Donald Trump's Ratepayer Protection Pledge, which was expanded last week and requires participating companies to build, procure or pay for all energy needed to power their facilities and associated infrastructure.

Under the non-binding pledge, developers, utilities and state regulators are expected to bear the costs associated with new projects rather than passing them on to residential customers.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Wall Street ends mixed as investors focus on tech earnings

SinÉad Carew and Noel Randewich
REUTERS

Wall Street ended mixed on July 27 , as investors awaited guidance from major technology companies in a busy week for quarterly earnings, while also worrying that stubbornly high oil prices could force the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

Microsoft, Amazon, Meta and Apple are set to report quarterly results this week. Investors were questioning whether a multi-year rally fueled by optimism about artificial intelligence may be losing steam.

Investors last week were spooked by quarterly results from Tesla and Alphabet that showed heavy spending on artificial intelligence. Walmart rose 2.1%, Microsoft added 1.9% and Johnson & Johnson rose 1%

On July 27, crude fell to a one-week low as President Donald Trump said Washington was having "good talks" with Iran and there was a chance of a peace deal, but warned U.S. strikes would resume if the negotiations failed to deliver.

Oil prices surged last week, with Brent futures surpassing $100 a barrel, after new strikes on shipping in the Middle East. Seven of the 11 S&P 500 sector indexes rose, led by consumer staples, up 1.58%, followed by a 1.25% gain in information technology. The PHLX chip index extended its recent selloff, falling 2.2%. It is down 21% from its record high close on June 22 and remains up 63% in 2026.

Chinese chipmaker CXMT Corp's stellar debut on July 27 and a report that the country has started manufacturing homegrown DUV chipmaking tools also signaled intensifying competition for the U.S. semiconductor industry.

"Part of the market reaction may be related to that creeping suspicion that perhaps a rate hike is coming."

Bill Merz
Head of capital markets research and portfolio construction at U.S. Bank Asset Management Group

"Today represents a continuation of the rotational market that we've seen," said Bill Merz, head of capital markets research and portfolio construction at U.S. Bank Asset Management Group. "Part of the market reaction may be related to that creeping suspicion that perhaps a rate hike is coming." The S&P 500 edged up 0.02% to end the session at 7,413.18 points. The Nasdaq declined 0.18% to 24,932.08 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.51% to 52,210.08 points.

Brent crude prices slid 8% to about $89 a barrel after Washington abruptly suspended a two-week campaign of air strikes against Iran on July 25 in Trump's latest strategic U-turn in the five-month-old conflict.

Oil company shares declined. Occidental Petroleum fell 4.1% and Exxon Mobil closed down 1.4%.

The Fed's monetary policy decision is due on July 29 and traders are projecting a 62% chance the central bank will leave rates unchanged, with a 38% chance of a 25-basis-point hike, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index for June is due a day after the central bank's decision and will be key in shaping market expectations for interest rates later this year.

Analysts on average expect S&P 500 aggregate second-quarter earnings to jump 39% from a year ago, with AI-related stocks accounting for much of that growth, according to LSEG I/B/E/S.

The S&P 500 is trading at around 20 times expected earnings, compared to a 10-year average of 20, according to LSEG data. Advancing issues outnumbered falling ones within the S&P 500 by a 1.9-to-one ratio.

The S&P 500 posted 30 new highs and three new lows. Volume on U.S. exchanges was relatively light, with 15.8 billion shares traded, compared to an average of 18.2 billion shares over the previous 20 sessions.

1 in 3 Americans back Iran war, poll finds

Most say Trump has not explained goals for conflict

Bo Erickson and Jason Lange
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Just one in three Americans support the war on Iran, the lowest reading in a Reuters/Ipsos poll since the five-month-old conflict's early days, with most respondents saying that President Donald Trump has failed to explain his goals.

The poll, conducted July 24 through July 26, also showed the Republican president's approval rating ticking higher to 37%, up three points from June when his rating tied the lowest of his presidency.

Trump has offered shifting objectives for the conflict such as aiding Iranians to topple their leaders, taking out Iran's ballistic-missile capabilities and preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The poll found that 69% of Americans – including four in 10 Republicans – think Trump has not "clearly explained the goals of U.S. military involvement in Iran." White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said Trump will not make decisions based on "fluid opinion polls" and reiterated the president's resolve to prevent Iran from ever acquiring a nuclear weapon.

"What matters most to the American people is having a commander in chief who takes bold action to keep them safe," Wales said.

Approval of the conflict has been below 40% since the United States and Israel launched strikes on Feb. 28.

Public disapproval of the war is weighing on Trump and his Republican Party ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections when the president's allies will defend slim majorities in Congress.

"It's not clear why we started a war with them. I have no idea," said Alex Womack, a retired turbine repair specialist from Stockbridge, Georgia, who became a Republican in part because he liked how Republican President George H.W. Bush handled the Gulf War in 1991.

Womack, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during that conflict, said his support for Trump has ebbed because of the war. "I don't think he's doing very well, personally," he said.

To date, 18 American soldiers have died in the conflict while thousands have died in Iran and in Lebanon, where Iran-allied fighters have battled Israeli forces. The war has pushed gasoline prices sharply higher, a blow to the finances of many Americans. Gasoline prices are averaging just over $4 a gallon nationwide, up from about $3 a gallon just before the war started.

"This puts pressure on the party in a myriad of ways, all of them bad," said Alex Conant, a Republican political strategist and a White House spokesman during the presidency of George W. Bush. "The White House officials have been saying since January that they need to win economic arguments. It's hard to win the economic arguments when you're clearly focused on foreign policy."

In campaigning for the 2024 presidential election, Trump said he would keep the United States out of enduring conflicts. He initially estimated the Iran war would last four to five weeks.

He has bristled over comparisons to other wars, including the Vietnam War, which lasted two decades and claimed the lives of more than 58,000 U.S. soldiers.

Rhyan Anderson, an independent from Fairburn, Georgia, who voted for Trump in 2024, said he thinks Trump should focus on domestic problems rather than on helping Israel.

"My biggest thing is just focus on the people who are actually in the country," said Anderson, who works two jobs in security and data collection and said he voted for Democrat Joe Biden in 2020. "I know we have allies and things like that, but there's a lot of people here that really need help."

Ballot

Continued from Page 1NN

a contentious package of voting restrictions called the SAVE America Act.

Trump has vowed to end the use of mail-in ballots nationwide before the midterms, and has long cast doubt on the security of such ballots, although evidence of voter fraud is rare.

Restricting mail-in ballots would stand to disproportionately benefit Republicans given that Democratic voters traditionally have been more likely to use mail-in ballots than Republican voters.

Trump's executive order directed the Department of Homeland Security to compile and transmit to the states a list of U.S. citizens eligible to vote in each state, and the Justice Department to prioritize investigating and prosecuting state and local election officials who issue ballots to people deemed "not eligible" to vote in federal elections.

It also required the U.S. Postal Service to deliver ballots only to voters on each state's approved mail-in ballot list. The Postal Service recently moved to implement Trump's directive.

States, including California and Massachusetts, sued in federal court in Boston to challenge Trump's order. A group of 12 Republican state attorneys general intervened in the case to defend Trump's directive.

Talwani found that the claims made by the challenging states were not premature, as the administration had argued, and that they had legal standing to sue over Trump's directive because they would face election administration disruption, compliance costs and a credible threat of criminal prosecution.

The judge also noted that federal agencies lack the ability to compile accurate citizen lists for each state.

The Justice Department asked the Boston-based 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to put Talwani's ruling on hold based on the administration's view that the challengers lacked standing to sue. The 1st Circuit rejected the request on July 25. In June, the Supreme Court rejected a Republican-backed challenge to state laws that allow mail-in ballots received after Election Day to be counted.

Palestinians say villagers last week were defending themselves against the latest in a series of attacks by settlers in the West Bank seeking to drive them off the land. MOHAMAD TOROKMAN/REUTERS

West Bank

Continued from Page 1NN

attacked them first before one of the villagers wrestled a gun from one of the settlers.

The incident followed a pattern seen repeatedly around the West Bank, with large groups of settlers appearing near Palestinian communities, threatening and harassing their inhabitants, often as security forces stand by.

Such shows of force have become more frequent over recent months, while ministers in Netanyahu's government talk openly about annexing the West Bank, which Israel occupied following the 1967 Middle East war.

On July 27 , Reuters reporters could see freshly cut tree trunks in fields at the edge of the village. Residents said that after the violence, settlers had come and cut down olive and fig trees.

According to United Nations figures, 18 Palestinians have been killed in incidents linked to settler attacks so far this year, compared with 17 in the whole of 2025. The Palestinian Authority says at least 20 Palestinians have been killed by settlers since the start of the year.

Since July 24, residents said there have been daily military raids on Tal, with between 60 and 80 people detained. About 30 remain in detention according to the deputy head of the village council Munther Shtayya.

In the early hours of July 27, residents said the military threw a man out of his house on the edge of the village. Reuters observed two soldiers standing on the roof of the man's home.

"All of the military is here in the streets," said Kamal Shtayya, 55, a resident of Tal.

As Netanyahu's government approaches elections in October, it has stepped up authorization for new settlement building in a drive ministers say is intended to tighten Israeli control over the West Bank.

The United Nations, Palestinians and most countries regard settlements as illegal under international law. Israel disputes this, saying the West Bank, which it captured in the 1967 war, is disputed territory, and citing biblical ties to the land.

"I'm patient, we'll be patient and patient and patient, but at the end of the day, patience runs out. It just flies away, it doesn't work," 72-year-old Tal farmer Ahmed Shtayya said.

"Any human being defends himself," he told Reuters.

Like many Palestinian farmers, Shtayya, who grows tomatoes, figs and eggplants, has seen settlers come ever closer. He said settlers have come up to him as he has been working, telling him the land belongs to Israel.

Just a few hundred yards up the road lies a burned-out home attacked by settlers a week ago, according to the vice head of the village council.

"I've come to this point. If they want to continue like this, there must be an explosion, what else?" Shtayya said.

Iran

Continued from Page 1NN

"This is not in our DNA," he said.

A senior Iranian official told Reuters on July 26 that Iran would halt its own attacks as long as Trump's self-imposed ceasefire continued.

Iran's central military command later on July 27 accused the U.S. of threatening vessels and oil tankers in its territorial waters and of "attempting to implement an illegal maritime blockade," which it said "constitutes an escalation of the conflict in the region."

Saudi Arabia said it shot down drones aimed at petroleum targets, including in Riyadh. It said they had been launched from Iraq by Iran-backed armed groups, and it reserved the right to respond.

Separately, Iran's Houthi allies in Yemen said they had targeted the East-West Pipeline carrying oil to Saudi Arabia's main Red Sea port of Yanbu in retaliation for Saudi drone incursions.

Tehran also said it remained in control of the contested Strait of Hormuz, the key waterway for global energy supplies, which Trump has demanded vessels be able to pass through freely.

Oil prices tumble

Public disapproval of the war has been weighing on Trump and his Republican Party ahead of November midterm elections in which they have to defend slim congressional majorities.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted over the weekend showed just one in three Americans support the Iran war, the lowest Reuters/Ipsos reading since the conflict's early days, with most saying Trump has failed to explain his goals.

The end of the U.S. campaign after 13 successive nights of intensifying bombing and Trump's remarks on talks sent oil prices tumbling.

U.S. crude CLc1 fell 8.21% to $81.98 a barrel, and Brent LCOc1 fell to $87.77 per barrel, down 9.31% on the day.

Trump's decision to suspend U.S. attacks reflected advice from his military that the bombing had reached the limits of what it could achieve, according to a U.S. official and several U.S. media reports.

The U.S. official told Reuters that military commanders had advised the president they were running out of targets and that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, had expressed concern over the depletion of air munitions.

Trump dismissed suggestions that the United States faced munitions shortages, saying the military was rapidly rebuilding inventories depleted by shipments to Ukraine. He said he would like more of "the more sophisticated stuff."

Iranian media: 6 ships turned back

Iranian state media outlets cited an "informed source" as saying that Iran had turned around six "offending ships" on July 27 that had attempted to cross the Strait of Hormuz without permission.

Trump launched his renewed bombing campaign to punish Iran after Tehran fired on ships using a route promoted by the United States, which told vessels to sail close to the coast of Oman.

Iran says ships may pass only through a Hormuz channel that runs closer to its own coast, which it controls and where it intends to impose transit fees.

The two weeks of renewed U.S. bombing killed scores in Iran and destroyed bridges and tunnels across the south as well as military targets.

Four U.S. service members were killed in return fire against U.S. bases in neighboring states. Iran also struck civilian infrastructure in Gulf countries, calling it retaliation for U.S. strikes.

It remains unclear what leverage Washington can exert to break Iran's grip on the strait.

Washington and Tehran reached an agreement in June on a framework for talks meant to take place by the end of August to resolve major issues such as Iran's nuclear program.

But they have disputed the meaning of the memorandum's language about the strait, with Washington insisting it requires Tehran to allow free travel, while Iran says it grants it the authority to supervise transit.